BIRZ COMICS SPECIAL

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【原作】梶原にき
【作画】小野不由美

多くの命が夜の闇の中、失われた。帝都・東京を揺るがした悲劇に、静かに幕が下りる。

大人気小野不由美の世界を精鋭梶原にきが完全漫画化!!

◇「東京異聞」完結編。第3巻同時発売!!

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【作画】小野不由美

幻冬舎コミックス

真、死ナ――夜摺見物の客で賑わう浅草五重塔から落ちた首は、大美魔人に殺されたか？――。首の事式に一刻が会す中、斬司家三男・幡が現れる。冷静な幡の言動に狼いを抱く新太郎、幡は何を知っているのか……。真の家を訪れた新太郎たちは、真の部屋で読売りの箱を見つける。大美魔人が現れる際、目撃されていた読売り――その箱は、真を殺人に仕立て上げるために置かれたものなのか。そして新たな犠牲者が――。

幻冬舎コミックスホームページ http://www.gentosha-comics.net

◇梶原にきのコミックス◇
バーズコミックスルチルコレクション
［月と水の夜］①②
［マドンナの片想い。］
大好評発売中!!

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とうけいいぶん

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（新潮文庫「東京異聞」より）

BIRZ COMICS SPECIAL

CONTENTS

Final Act.
The turn of the age.

Fourth Act.
When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered.

Part 6 — 107
Part 5 — 79
Part 4 — 55
Part 3 — 25
1

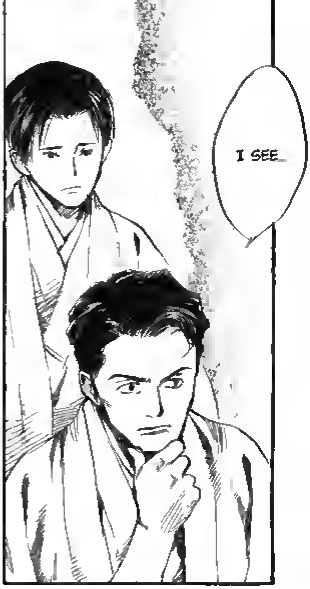
Fourth Act.
When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered.
(Part 3)

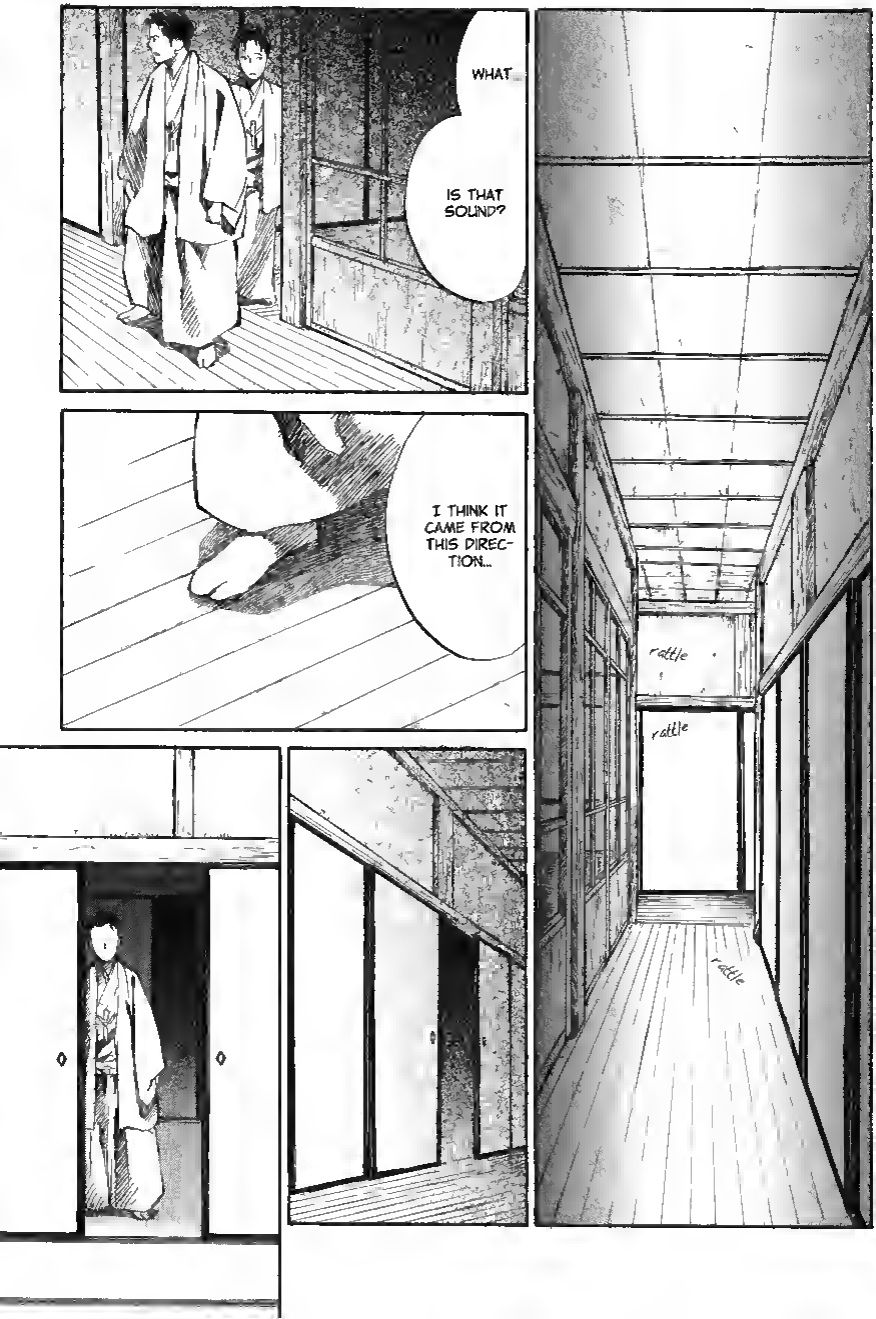
HIRAKAWA-SAN,
SAKICHI IS A PUDDLE OF JOY.
YOU SHOULD BE CONGRATULATING HIM.
KIKUE-SAN...

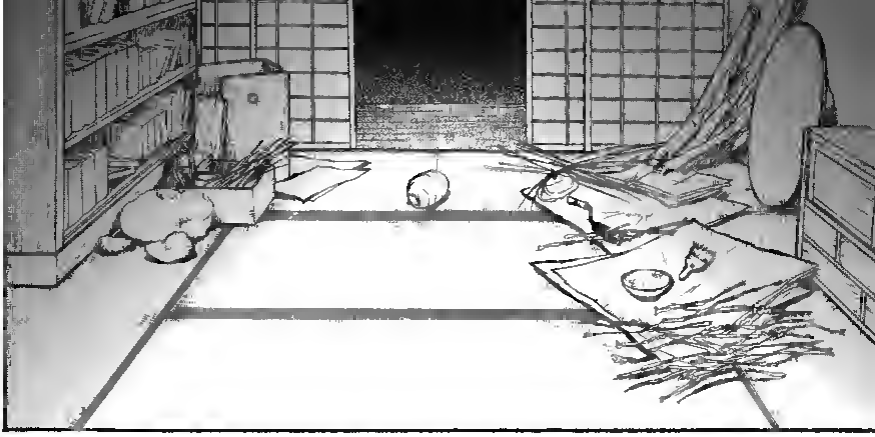
MARINO-SAN. SURPRISED ME, TOO
.....
I AGREE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE ANYONE WOULD SAY SUCH A THING AT SUCH A PLACE
WHY DOES SHE ALWAYS SPEAK LIKE THAT?
YES, THAT MAY BE A GOOD IDEA.
WHAT HAPPENED WAS JUST TOO PITIFUL
LET'S GO SEE HOW O-CHIYO-SAN IS.
MANZOU-KUN,
SHE'S NOT BACK YET?
WHAT?

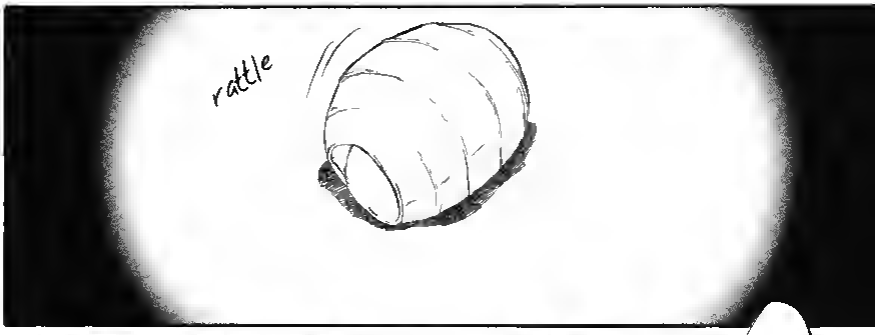
HEY, YOU!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING..?
BUT SHE LEFT THE WAKE MUCH EARLIER THAN US WE WERE CERTAIN SHE'S ALREADY HERE.
THAT'S RIGHT
COULD YOU GO AROUND AND LOOK FOR MADAM?
I'LL GO LOOK FOR MADAM, TOO.
COULD YOU WAIT IN THE INNER ROOMS?
PLEASE, COME IN.

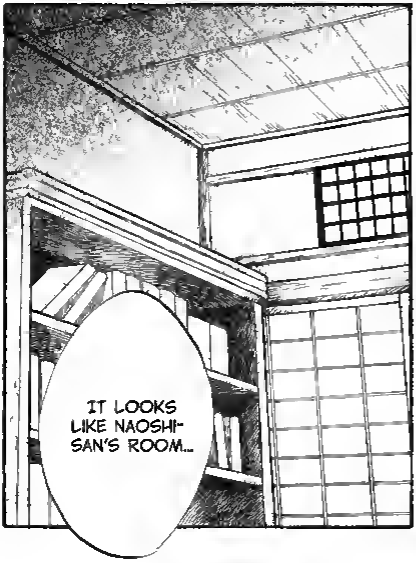
IT MUST HAVE BEEN A TERRIBLE BLOW FOR HER...
I JUST HOPE SHE HASN'T... DONE ANYTHING RASH.
OF COURSE.
WE'LL KEEP AN EYE ON THE HOUSE WHILE YOU'RE OUT
PLEASE.
AH, YES,
JUST ONE THING
DID YOU TAKE A LETTER TO TOKIWA-SAN YESTERDAY?
WAS IT FROM NAOSHI-SAN?
YES.
OF COURSE IT WAS. WHY?


I SEE...


WHAT...
IS THAT SOUND?
I THINK IT CAME FROM THIS DIRECTION...
rattle
rattle
rattle




rattle

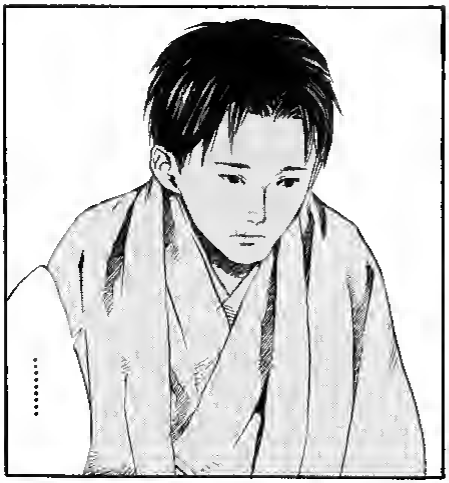

IT LOOKS LIKE NAOSHI-SAN'S ROOM...

WHAT IS THIS...?

WHAT WAS HE MAKING HERE...?
IT'S SO MESSY...
HIRAKAWA-SAN!

THIS...
THIS IS...!
STRANGE AND FANTASTIC NEWS
THE NEWS SELLER'S BOX...!

STRANGE AND FANTASTIC NEWS
IMPOS-SIBLE...
WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE FLAMING DEMON.
STRANGE AND FANTASTIC NEWS
THEN THE ONE I MET...
DON'T TELL ME NAOSHI-SAN WAS THE...


.....

NAOSHI-SAN WAS THE FLAMING DEMON...
IS THAT WHAT THIS MEANS?

DOES THIS MEAN NAOSHI-SAN ATTACKED TOKIWA-SAN BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG
AND HE FELL FROM THE PAGODA HIMSELF...?

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
BUT THIS IS...
HE WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN, TOO, RIGHT?!
AND HE COULD HAVE NEVER MISTAKEN SAKICHI-SAN FOR TOKIWA-SAN!
MAYBE WHAT HAPPENED AT THE CHIROU HALL WAS AN ACT, AFTER ALL?
IN THAT CASE, YAMIGOZEN MUST BE O-CHIYO-SAN.
HE DIDN'T EVEN WANT THE INHERITANCE IN THE FIRST PLACE!

MAYBE...
IT WASN'T ABOUT THE INHERITANCE
IMPOSSIBLE.
NEITHER O-CHIYO-SAN NOR NAOSHI-SAN WERE THAT KIND OF PEOPLE.
THEY BOTH MADE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT THEY DID NOT WANT THE INHERITANCE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
MAYBE NAOSHI-SAN HELD A GRUDGE AGAINST EITHER TOKIWA-SAN OR THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY...
YOU MEAN...
FOR HATSUKO-SAMA?
MAYBE.
OR MAYBE HE WAS THE ONE WHO DID AWAY WITH HATSUKO-SAMA, TOO...
AND HE HATED EVEN TOKIWA-SAN BECAUSE SHE LIKED HIM SO MUCH...

AHHH!
BUT...
THAT'S ABSURD...
O-CHIYO-SAMA?!
grab
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
O-CHIYO -SAMA-
GO AWAY!
BUT-
GO AWAY!
AND NEVER COME BACK!
LET'S GO, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.

ALL THIS WASN'T HERE YESTERDAY!
IT'S NOT! IT WASN'T HIM!
IT WASN'T HERE YESTERDAY...
I CAME HERE TO BRING TEA, SO I'M SURE.
IT WAS JUST BEFORE HE WENT OUT.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I PANICKED, HURRIED TO THE AZABU MANSION, AND RETURNED ONLY TODAY, TO GET MY MOURNING CLOTHES
HE DIDN'T COME BACK...
AND IN THE EVENING KATSURAI-SAN SAID NAOSHI WAS DEAD...
AND THIS HAD APPEARED...

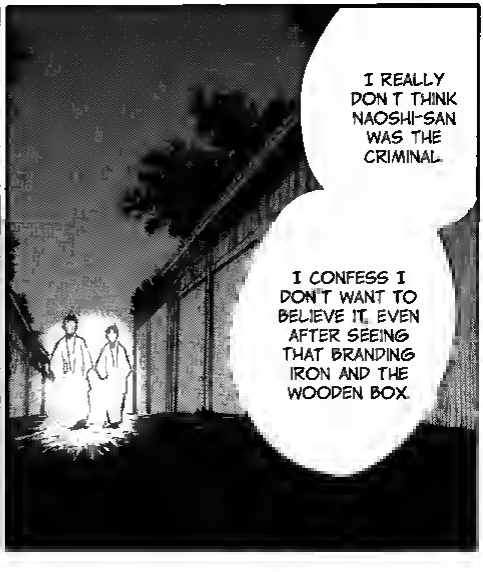
HE WAS MURDERED!
SOMEONE KILLED HIM!
IT WASN'T NAOSHI!
HE WASN'T THAT KIND OF MAN!
AHHHH!
WE TOO THINK IT WASN'T HIM.
O-CHIYO-SAMA...

AND EVEN IF HE WAS THE CRIMINAL,
HE WOULD HAVE NEVER LEFT THIS HERE.
HIRAKA-WA-SAN..
HE WASN'T THE KIND OF MAN TO KILL ANYONE BECAUSE OF HIS OWN SELFISH DESIRES.
SOMEONE USED THE COMMOTION OF THE LAST TWO DAYS TO SNEAK IN HERE.
SOMEONE BROUGHT IT HERE TO PUT THE BLAME ON HIM.
OF COURSE WE DO.
YOU.. BELIEVE IN NAOSHI..?

MANZOU-KUN, I...

THANK YOU...

BUT I'M NOT SAYING IT JUST OUT OF COMPAS-SION.

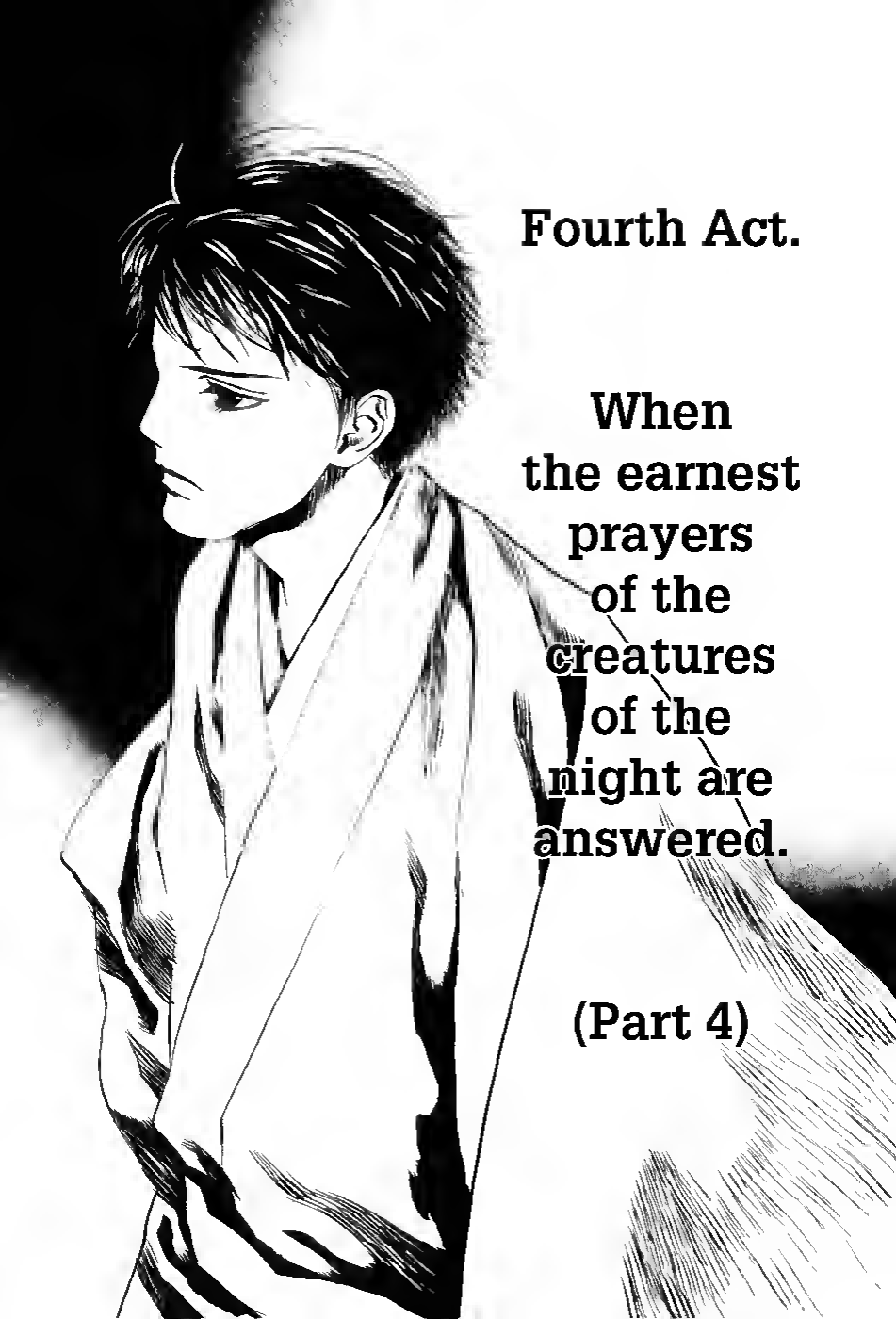

I REALLY DON'T THINK NAOSHI-SAN WAS THE CRIMINAL.
I CONFESS I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT, EVEN AFTER SEEING THAT BRANDING IRON AND THE WOODEN BOX.

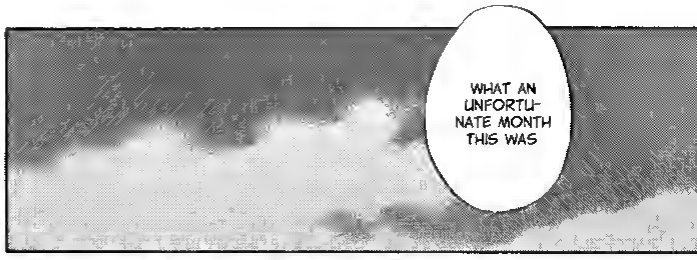
I THINK WE SHOULDN'T, TOO.
IF IT WERE HIM, THE CRIMES WILL STOP.
BUT IT'S SCARY TO THINK WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF WE RELAX.
WE SHOULDN'T LET OUR GUARD DOWN AS LONG AS WE DO NOT HAVE CONCRETE PROOF THAT IT WAS REALLY NAOSHI-SAN.
I THINK NAOSHI-SAN DIDN'T DO IT
.....
BECAUSE HE KNEW IT WAS SAKICHI-SAN WHO WENT TO THE IZAWA-YA.
HE DIDN'T NEED TO PUSH SAKICHI BY MISTAKE, INSTEAD OF TOKIWA-SAN.

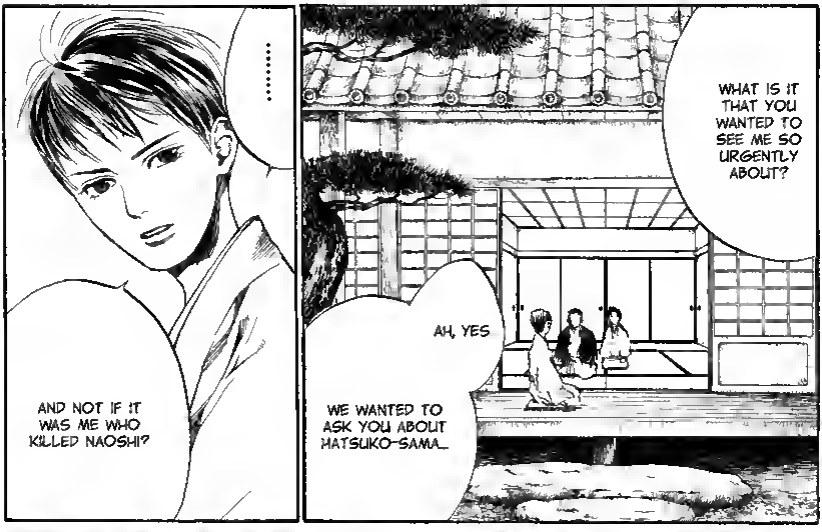
IT SEEMS THAT IT WAS NAOSHI-SAN WHO CALLED TOKIWA-SAN TO ASAKUSA,
BUT MAYBE HE WAS CALLED THERE HIMSELF
HE WAS ATTACKED AT THE CHIROU HALL.
WE DON'T KNOW WHO THE KUROKO IS, BUT I THINK NAOSHI-SAN WAS IN REAL DANGER, IF IT WEREN'T FOR THAT MAN.
SO THAT MEANS IT WAS TOKIWA-SAN?
I CAN'T HELP THINKING THAT THIS IS WHAT LEAD TO HIS DEATH.
WHAT BOTHERS ME IS WHAT HE CLAIMED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CRIMINAL.
HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO STOP THEM.

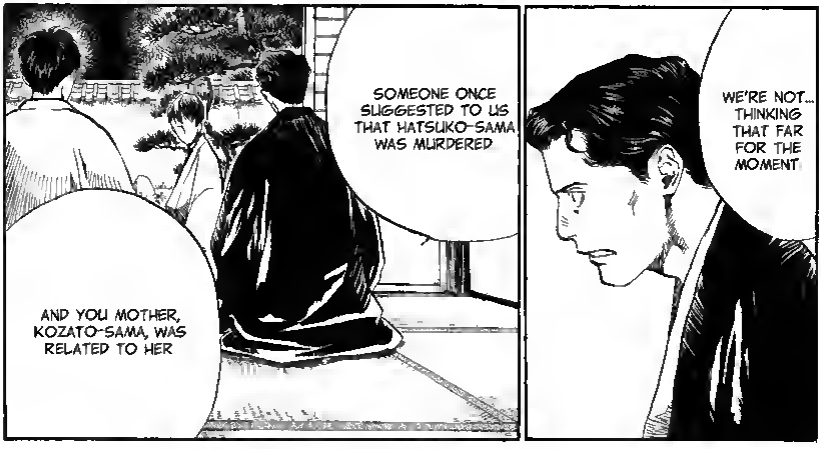
IT'S NOT HIM EITHER.
HE WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN.
AND EVEN IF THAT WAS A FARCE, THEN AT LEAST WE KNOW HE WAS WITH KIKUE-SAN UNTIL RIGHT BEFORE THE ATTACK.
KIKUE-SAN COULDN'T HAVE KILLED THE WOMAN
THEREFORE, NEITHER COULD HE HAVE.
FURTHERMORE, WHEN SAKICHI WAS ATTACKED, TOKIWA-SAN WAS AT HOME.
HE WAS THERE WHEN I MET THE NEWS SELLER, TOO
THEN...
IS IT TASUKU-SAN?

REALLY... THE MORE I THINK ABOUT ALL THIS, THE LESS I UNDERSTAND IT...
I DON'T KNOW
.....


Fourth Act.
When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered.
(Part 4)


WHAT AN UNFORTU-NATE MONTH THIS WAS


.....
AND NOT IF IT WAS ME WHO KILLED NAOSHI?
AH, YES
WE WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT HATSUKO-SAMA...
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANTED TO SEE ME SO URGENTLY ABOUT?


AND YOU MOTHER, KOZATO-SAMA, WAS RELATED TO HER
SOMEONE ONCE SUGGESTED TO US THAT HATSUKO-SAMA WAS MURDERED
WE'RE NOT... THINKING THAT FAR FOR THE MOMENT

SO WE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING.
WAS TOKIWA THAT SOME-ONE?
NO... HE'S NOT THAT KIND OF PERSON.
WHAT HAP-PENED TO HATSU-KO-SAMA
WAS AN ACCIDENT.
THAT'S WHAT I HEARD AND I THINK IT'S TRUE.
EH...?
THEN WHY DID SHE GO OUT TO SEA AT NIGHT?
WHO KNOWS?
MAYBE THE SIREN CALLED OUT TO HER.

IT SEEMS THAT A STRANGE MONSTER APPEARS IN YOKOHAMA PORT LATELY
THE BOTTOM HALF OF HER BODY IS A SEA BIRD AND SHE HAS A BEAUTIFUL VOICE.
SHE'S SOMETHING LIKE THE SIRENS THEY HAVE IN THE WEST
TASUKU-SAN...
HATSUKO-SAMA BELIEVED IN HER
SHE TOLD ME NOW THAT THERE'S A SIREN LIVING NEARBY, SHE PLANNED TO GO SEE HER SOON.
I'M ASKING YOU SERIOUSLY
I'M ANSWERING SERIOUSLY.
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN ALMOST A SUICIDE,
BECAUSE SHE ALWAYS SAID SHE COULDN'T BEAR TO WATCH WHERE THIS COUNTRY WAS HEADED
SO YOU ARE SAYING... THERE'S A CHANCE IT WAS A SUICIDE?
MAYBE SHE REALLY WENT AND LOST HER LIFE.

T-THERE'S SOMETHING THAT STRUCK ME AT NAOSHI-SAN'S FUNERAL.
DO YOU KNOW MARINO-SAN?
.....
I'M NOT SAYING THAT.
I'M SAYING SHE WAS IN A POSITION WHERE SHE DIDN'T REALLY CARE IF SHE DIED.
THAT'S A MONSTER.
ARE YOU SAYING YAMIGOZEN AND THE FLAMING DEMON ARE MONSTERS, TOO?
I HAVEN'T MET THEM, SO I DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU ENCOUNTERED IN THE DARK ALLEY WAS A MONSTER, TOO.

THEN IT MUST BE HATSUKO-SAMA'S RESTLESS SPIRIT.
OR THE PREVIOUS KURABASHI MASTER.
THEY MUST HAVE FELT GREAT DISCORD ABOUT THE ISHIN REVOLUTION.
THEY SEEM TO ME LIKE SOMEONE TARGETING YOUR FAMILY
OR SOMEONE OUT FOR REVENGE...
*NOTE: THE TWO RELIGIONS WERE SEPARATED BY A LAW AND LED TO STRONG ANTI-BUDDHIST MOVEMENTS.
HE SAID RELIGION WAS NECESSARY, BUT IT HAD TO BE SEPARATED AND REFINED, SO THAT EVEN FOREIGN COUNTRIES WOULD UNDERSTAND IT
FATHER, ON THE OTHER HAND, SUPPORTED IT.
THE SEPARATION OF SHINTO AND BUDDHISM.* THE LAST KURABASHI MASTER WAS SEVERELY AGAINST IT.
DISCORD?
THAT'S WHY THE PREVIOUS KURABASHI MASTER HATED FATHER
WHEN THE BUDDHIST PRIESTS AND MONKS ORGANIZED A PROTEST AGAINST THE ABOLITION OF BUDDHISM, FATHER MANIPULATED THINGS SO THAT THE FAULT FOR THAT FELL ON KURABASHI, THE HEIRS OF THE ABE BLOODLINE.
AND SHINTO WAS JUST MUCH MORE EASILY UNDERSTANDABLE TO FOREIGNERS THAN BUDDHISM WITH ALL ITS CONFUSING SECTS AND TEACHINGS

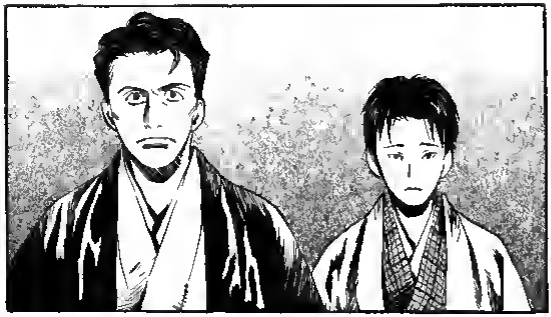
THAT DIDN'T MATTER TO FATHER.
SHE WAS JUST A WIFE THE TAKATSUKASA HAD FORCED ON HIM.
MAYBE HE EVEN HATED THAT FAMILY EVEN MORE BECAUSE IT WAS HERS.
BUT THE KURABASHI HOUSE WAS HATSUKO-SAMA'S FAMILY...
THE TRUTH IS THAT HATSUKO-SAMA COULDN'T GO BACK HOME EVEN WHEN THE PREVIOUS KURABASHI MASTER PASSED AWAY.
I HEARD THAT WHEN SHE FINALLY SOMEHOW MANAGED TO GET FATHER'S PERMISSION TO GO HOME, HER FATHER WAS ALREADY DEAD
HE EVEN FORBADE HER TO SET FOOT IN HER OWN PARENTAL HOUSE.
WAS THAT SO...?

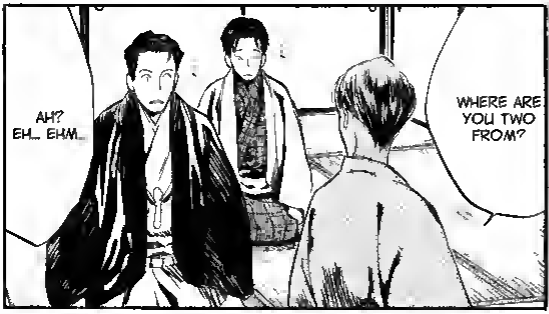
BUT YOUR MOTHER TOO WAS RELATED TO THE KURA-BASHI HOUSE...
YES.
IT WAS HATSUKO-SAMA WHO ASKED MY FATHER TO START VISITING MY MOTHER
I'VE HEARD IT SAID SHE SPOKE VERY BITTERLY OF THIS.
THAT'S...
HATSUKO-SAMA DIDN'T LIKE EITHER O-SAWA-SAN OR O-CHIYO-SAN, SO SHE WOULD GRIND INCESSANTLY IF HE VISITED THEM.
THAT'S WHY IT WAS EASIEST FOR MY FATHER TO VISIT MY MOTHER OUT OF ALL OF THEM

STRANGE PEOPLE, RIGHT?
IT'S ALL SO...
EHM, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM
LORD HIROMICHI FORBADE HATSUKO-SAMA TO GO TO HER HOME AND YET HE STARTED VISITING KOZATO-SAN, OUT OF SENSITIVITY TO HIS WIFE'S WISHES.
SO HATSUKO-SAMA HATED ALL CONCU-BINES AND YET SHE ASKED HER HUSBAND HERSELF TO GET ONE MORE.
ALTHOUGH ALL OF THEM HAD THEIR CIRCUM-STANCES

.....
MAYBE HE WANTED A DIVORCE.
BUT DIVORCE WAS IMMORAL ACCORDING TO THE OLD RELIGION
MAYBE HE WAS INFLUENCED BY HIS FOREIGN VISITORS
FIRST OF ALL,
FATHER WASN'T SO ATTACHED TO EITHER O-SAWA-SAN OR O-CHIYO-SAN AS TO QUARREL WITH HATSUKO-SAMA OVER THEM.
YES, WE WEREN'T TAKEN IN
BECAUSE HATSUKO-SAMA OPPOSED IT.
WHAT ABOUT YOU AND YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER...?
WHENEVER HE INTRODUCED MOTHER TO HIS ACQUAINTANCES,
HE DIDN'T SAY SHE WAS A CONCUBINE. HE WANTED TO TAKE NAOSHI AND TOKIWA TO BE BROUGHT UP AS HIS WIFE'S CHILDREN.

INCIDENTALLY
DID SHE...?
WHY DID YOU COME TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL, TASUKU-SAN?
LOOKS LIKE TOKIWA-SAN DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IT EITHER.
I'M...
MANY REASONS...
I DIDN'T TELL TOKIWA ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT WOULD BE TOO BOTHERSOME TO BE ORDERED TO COME TO AZABU




AH? EH... EHM...
WHERE ARE YOU TWO FROM?

I DON'T KNOW
MY PARENTS WERE VAGA-BONDS AND LEFT ME BEHIND AS SOON AS I WAS BORN...
AND YOU?
I WAS BORN IN AIZU
MY FATHER WAS THE FEUDAL LORD'S VASSAL...

MUCH MORE A KURABASHI THAN A TAKAT-SUKASA.
THAT'S HOW I THINK OF MYSELF

.....
TRAVELING PERFORMERS PICKED ME UP AND I WENT ALL AROUND WITH THEM UNTIL I WAS OF AGE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF. THAT'S WHEN I CAME TO THE CAPITAL.
I SEE...
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO THE TAKATSUKASA.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INHERITANCE, EITHER
AND YOU TWO WOULD BETTER NOT GO TOO DEEP INTO THIS.
IT'S NO BIG DEAL ANYWAY.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT AFTER YOUR BROTHER WAS MURDERED...?!

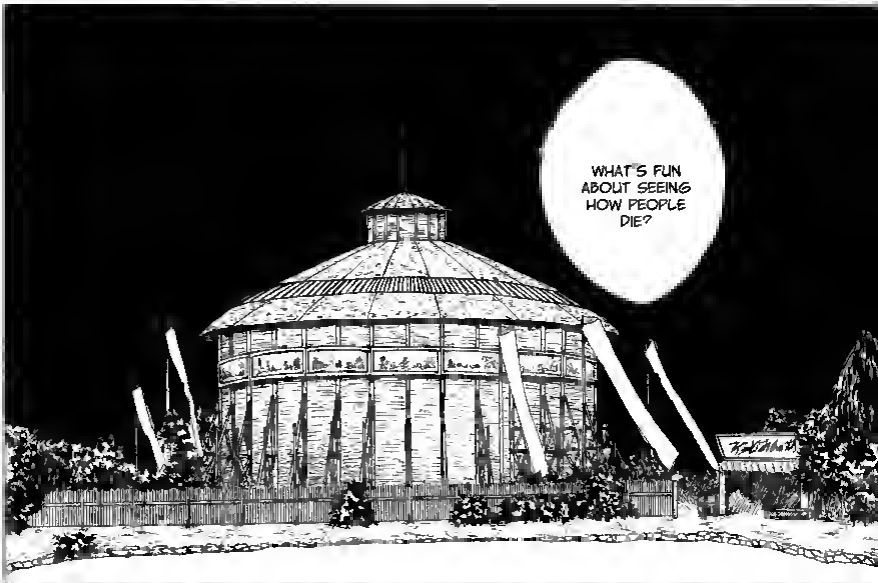
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ONE HUMAN BEING ARE ACTUALLY
A VERY SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT THING, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
KNOW THAT I WON'T BE THERE TO SAVE YOU IF YOU DO
PLEASE, GO HOME BEFORE THE NIGHTS GETS TOO DARK.
FEEL FREE TO POKE YOUR NOSES INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S FAMILY TRAGEDIES, BUT...

THIS ERA IS NOT AS SAFE
AS YOU SEEM TO THINK IT TO BE

IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE WE VISITED TASUKU-SAN. ARE YOU STILL BROODING OVER THAT?
YEAH...
HE STATED VERY DEFINITELY THAT HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE INCIDENTS
I WONDER ABOUT THAT...
HE CLAIMS THE START OF THE INCIDENTS
AND HIS COMING TO THE CAPITAL ARE UNRE-LATED...
.....
HIRAKA-WA-SAN!
MANZOU-SAN!

AND I WAS WONDERING WHO IT MAY BE WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE BRINGING COMPANY...
GOOD AFTER-NOON!
WILL YOU REALLY TAKE ME TO THE PANORAMIC HALL?
AH, I'M SO HAPPY!
YES, THE PANORAMA HALL, THE PUBLIC FLOWER GARDEN, ANYWHERE YOU LIKE.
IS THE FAMILY STILL IN CHAOS?

I WONDER WHERE TO START? THE ART PANORAMA FEATURES A TOUR AROUND THE WORLD, RIGHT?
AND THE JAPAN PANORAMA...
AH, NO...
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
I KNEW IT, YOU'RE AFTER MY BLABBERING.
THEN LET'S GO TO THE ART PANORAMA.
JUST LAST MONTH THEY CHANGED IT TO A PANORAMA FROM THE ALL-OUT ATTACK ON PYONGYANG, KOREA.

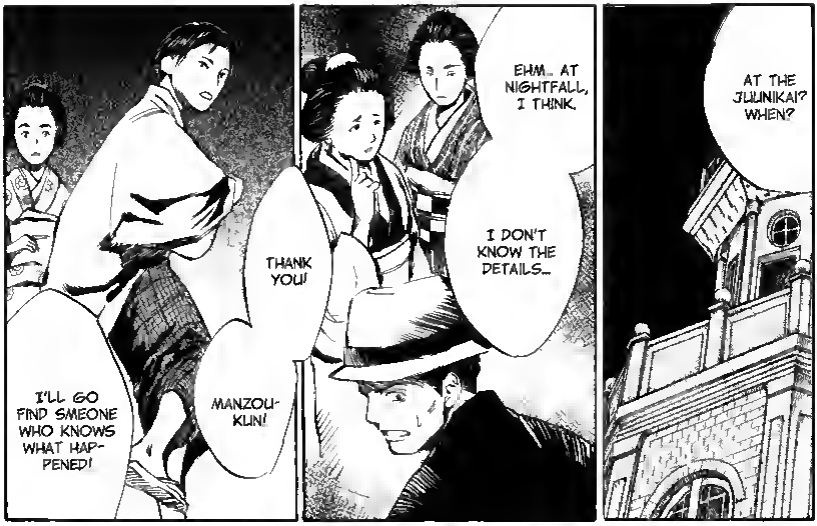

WHAT'S FUN ABOUT SEEING HOW PEOPLE DIE?

THE PANORAMA HALL WAS AMAZING!
IF YOU CAN GO OUT FOR SUCH A LONG TIME, THEN THINGS AT THE HOUSE AREN'T SO BAD?
TOKIWA-SAMA WENT TO THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT AND THE PEER'S CLUB HE'S ALSO VERY BUSY WITH GOING AROUND VISITING PEOPLE.
WE HAVE NOTHING TO DO ANYMORE...
ALMOST ALL RELATIVES ALREADY LEFT, TOO
HE SEEMED TERRIBLY DEPRESSED. IS HE GETTING BETTER NOW?
YES, PROBABLY...
HE DIDN'T KEEP COMPANY WITH NAOSHI-SAN SO MUCH
WE DIDN'T EXPECT HIM TO BE STRUCK SO HARD BY HIS DEATH.

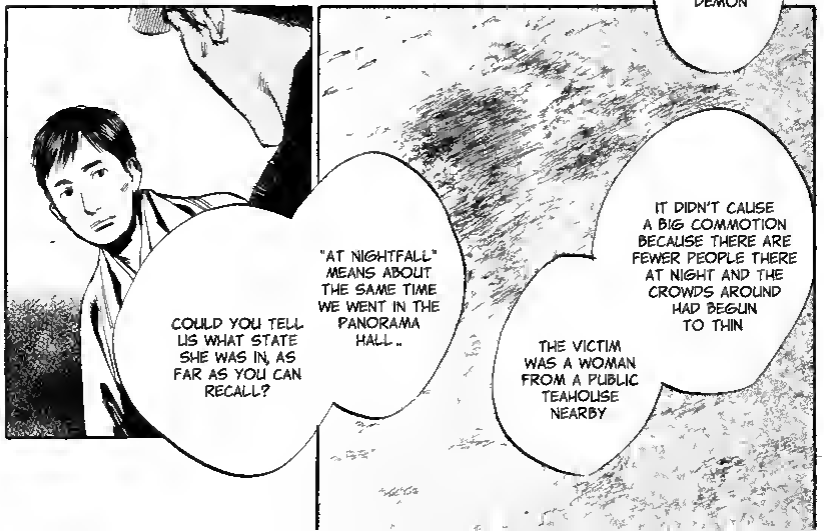
THAT'S SOMEHOW... UNEXPECTED
OH? REALLY?
KIKUE-SAN HAS ALSO BEEN KEEPING HER DISTANCE EVER SINCE THE FUNERAL.
BY THE WAY, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO NAOSHI-SAN'S HOUSE?
IS SHE?
AND IT LOOKS LIKE MARINO-SAN IS STILL IN THE ISHIGOME HOUSE, TOO
I THINK TOKIWA-SAMA MEANS TO LEAVE IT TO O-CHIYO-SAMA AS IT IS
THAT HOUSE USED TO BE TAKATSUKASA'S VILLA OR SOMETHING, RIGHT?
NO.
HATSUKO-SAMA BOUGHT IT FOR NAOSHI-SAMA FOR SOME REASON OR OTHER...
BUT ANYWAY, SHE BOUGHT IT.

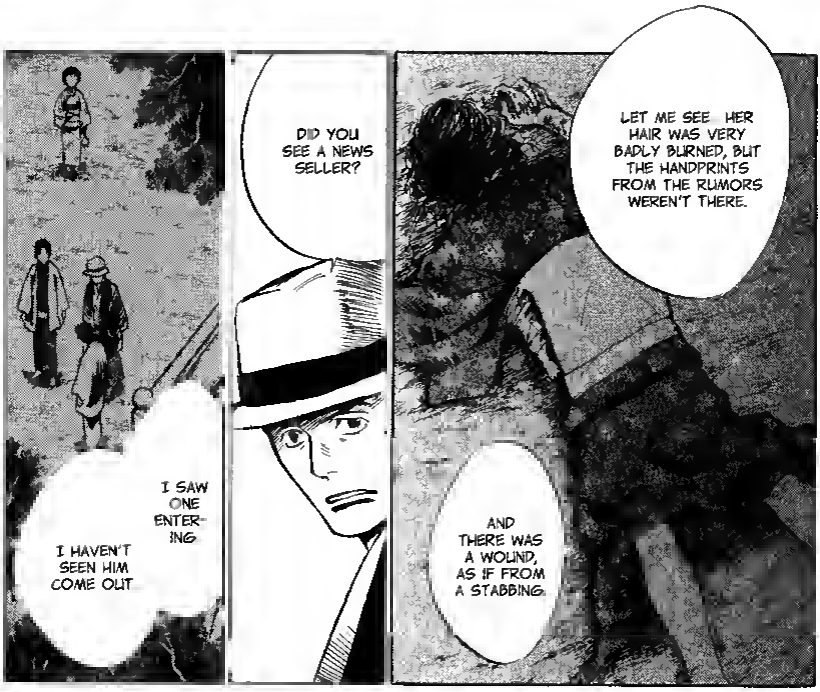
!
IT'S JUST AS IF HE WAS CARRYING AWAY THE SOULS OF THE FOUR CHILDREN FROM THE BELL TOWER.
FOUR? NOT ONE?
THERE WERE FOUR THINGS FLUTTERING IN HIS SACK.
SO IT WAS AFTER NAOSHI-SAN WAS KILLED...
EH?
PEOPLE SAY THEY WERE JUST LITTLE VAGABONDS AND WILL GO BACK HOME ANY DAY NOW.
Very much so
AH, THOSE KIDS WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN AFTER THAT.
AL-THOUGH IT'S PROBABLY JUST A COIN-CIDENCE...
WHAT A CREEPY STORY...
VERY MUCH SO

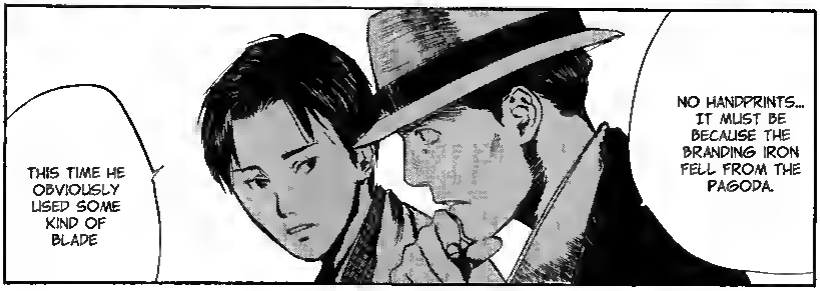
O-TAE-SAN, PLEASE, WATCH CARE-FULLY OVER TOKIWA-SAN.
OF COURSE I WILL
BUT WHY SO SUDDENLY?
SAKICHI-SAN, TOKIWA-SAN AND OF COURSE, NAOSHI-SAN ARE NOT THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER
AND HE WAS WANDERING ABOUT AROUND THE TAKATSU-KASA HOUSE...
NO, IT'S NOTHING
WHAT, THE FLAMING DEMON?
EXCUSE ME!
DID YOU JUST MEN-TION THE FLAMING DEMON?
YES... LOOKS LIKE HE APPEARED AGAIN, JUST A WHILE AGO.
dash
REALLY!
AT THE JULINKAI! SO SCARY!

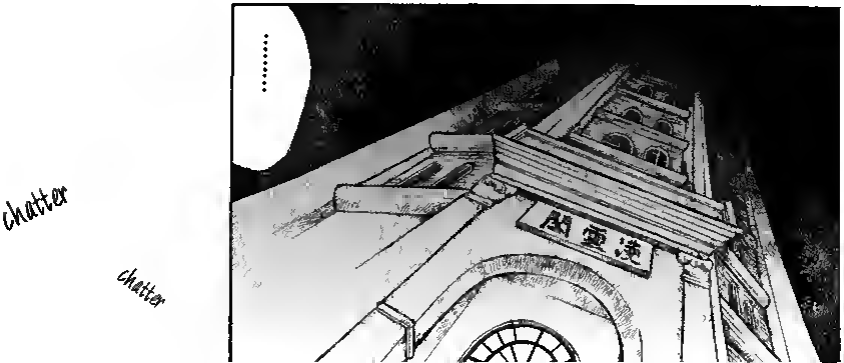

I'LL GO FIND SMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT HAP-PENED!
MANZOU-KUN!
THANK YOU!
EHM... AT NIGHTFALL, I THINK.
I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS...
AT THE JUUNIKAI? WHEN?

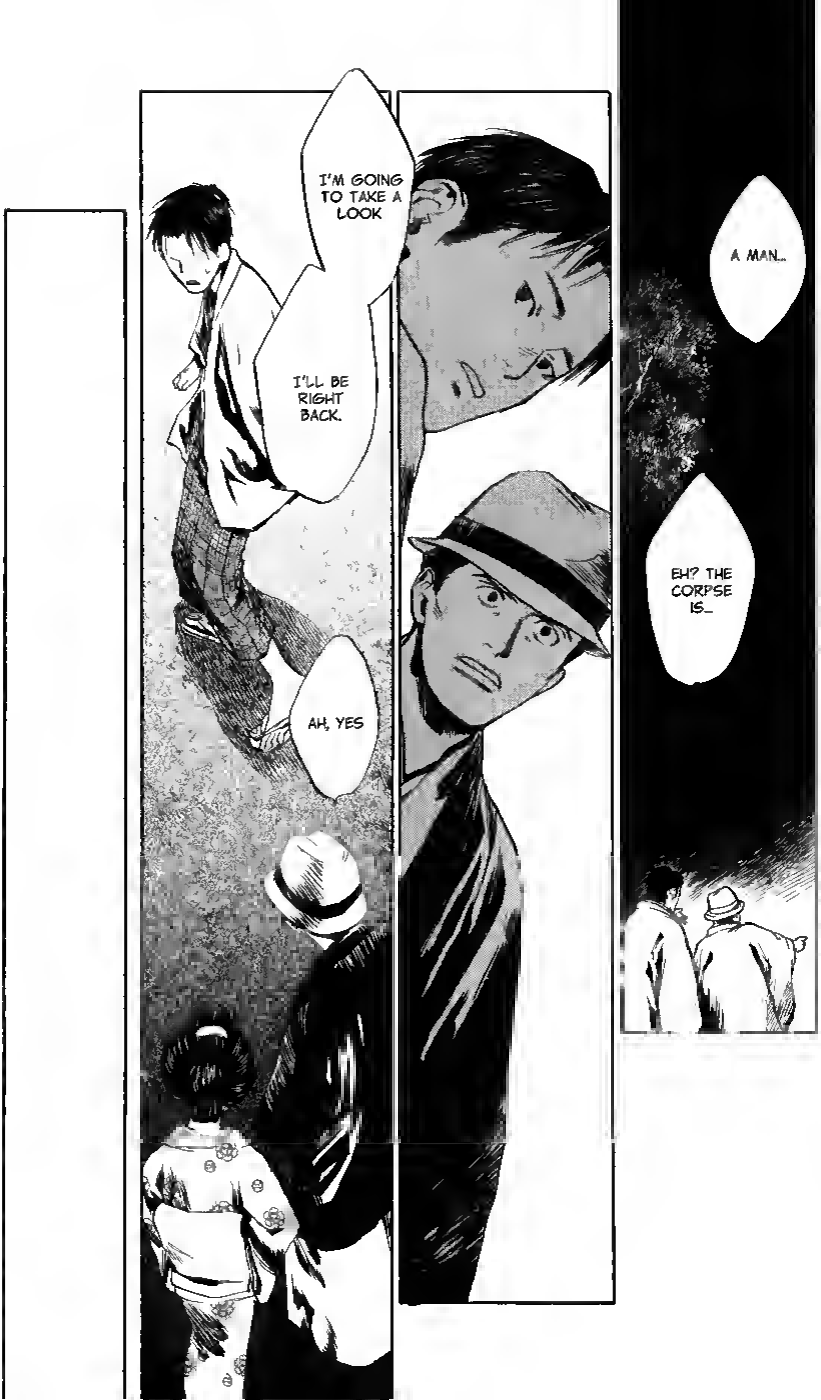
IT REALLY WAS THE FLAMING DEMON

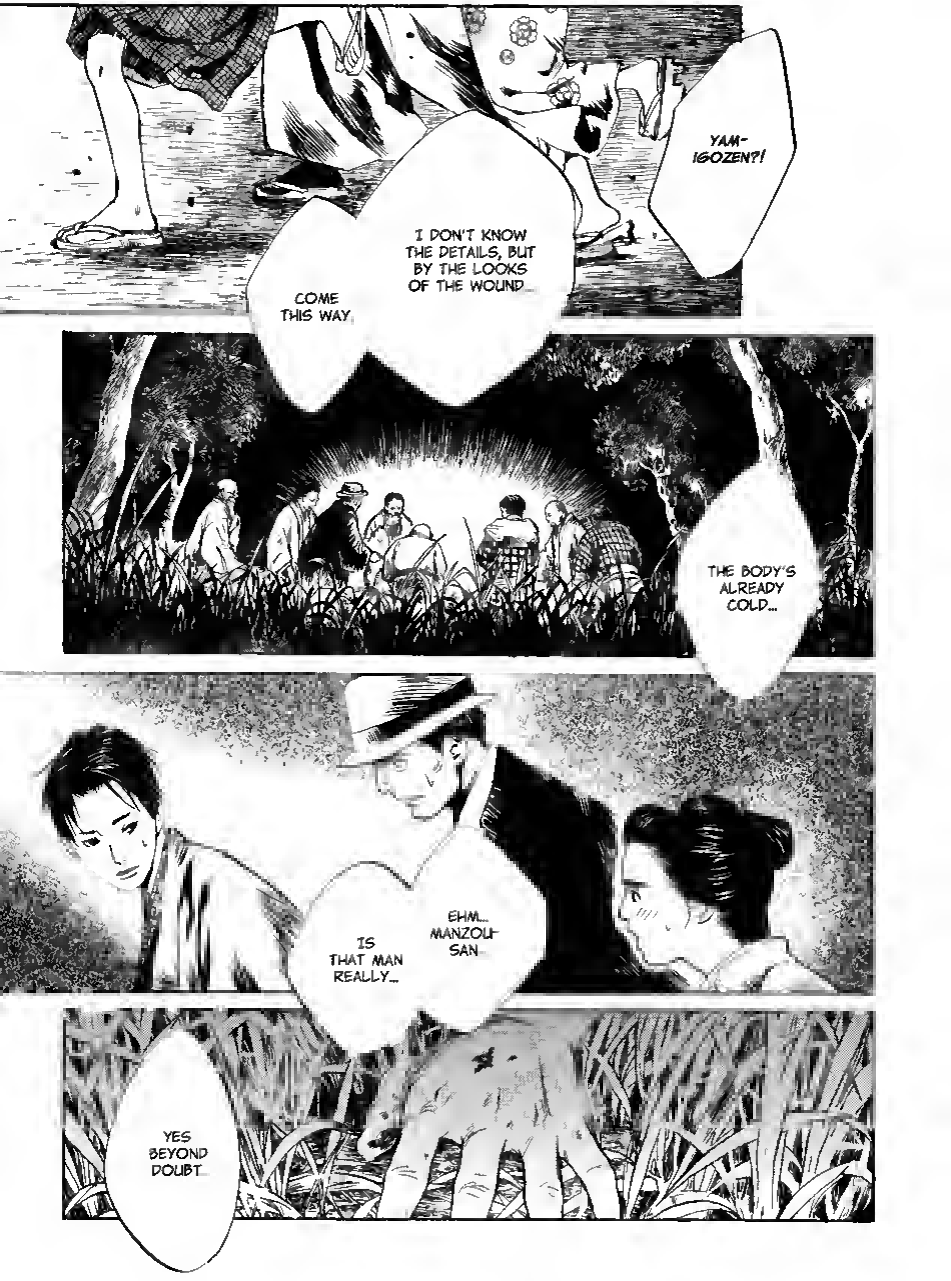

COULD YOU TELL US WHAT STATE SHE WAS IN, AS FAR AS YOU CAN RECALL?
"AT NIGHTFALL" MEANS ABOUT THE SAME TIME WE WENT IN THE PANORAMA HALL..
IT DIDN'T CAUSE A BIG COMMOTION BECAUSE THERE ARE FEWER PEOPLE THERE AT NIGHT AND THE CROWDS AROUND HAD BEGUN TO THIN
THE VICTIM WAS A WOMAN FROM A PUBLIC TEAHOUSE NEARBY


I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM COME OUT
I SAW ONE ENTERING
DID YOU SEE A NEWS SELLER?
LET ME SEE... HER HAIR WAS VERY BADLY BURNED, BUT THE HANDPRINTS FROM THE RUMORS WEREN'T THERE.
AND THERE WAS A WOUND, AS IF FROM A STABBING.


THIS TIME HE OBVIOUSLY USED SOME KIND OF BLADE
NO HANDPRINTS... IT MUST BE BECAUSE THE BRANDING IRON FELL FROM THE PAGODA.

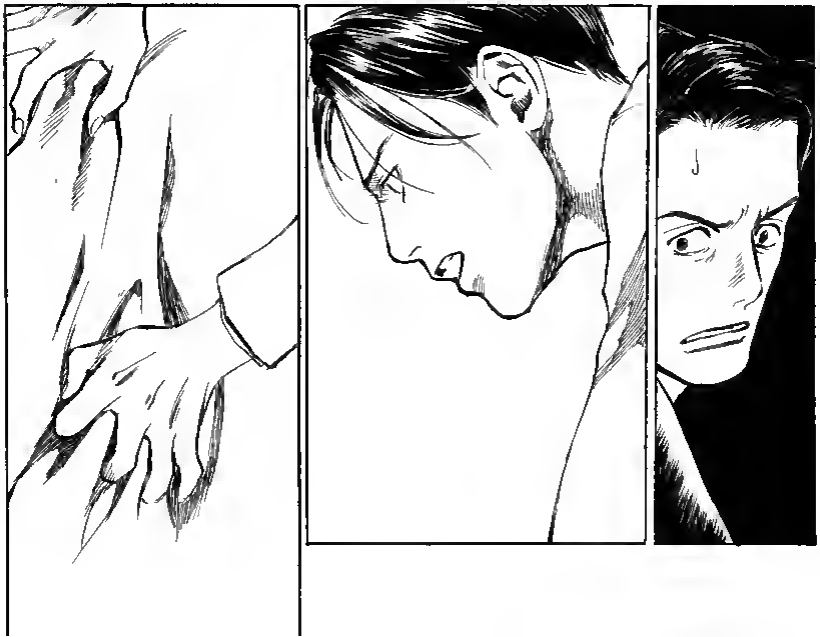

.....
chatter
chatter


A MAN...
EH? THE CORPSE IS...
I'M GOING TO TAKE A LOOK
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
AH, YES

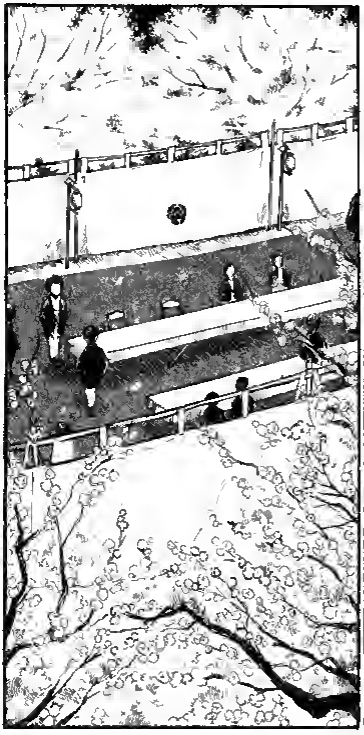

YAM-IGOZEN?!
I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS, BUT BY THE LOOKS OF THE WOUND...
COME THIS WAY.
THE BODY'S ALREADY COLD...
EHM... MANZOU-SAN...
IS THAT MAN REALLY...
YES BEYOND DOUBT.

IT'S SAKICHI-SAN.

SAKICHI?!
BUT I DIDN'T ASK HIM WHERE HE WAS GOING...
SAKICHI-SAN WENT OUT THIS AFTERNOON...
WHY...
IMPOS-SIBLE...



Fourth Act.
When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered.
(Part 5)



THIS HOUSE IS ESSENTIALLY IN MOURNING,
SO A MEETING LIKE THIS SHOULD BE TAKING PLACE.
BUT THIS IS A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOUL NOT ONLY OF MY BROTHER, NAOSHI, BUT FOR SAKICHI AS WELL.
THAT IS WHY WE HAVE WITH US THOSE WHO WERE CLOSE TO SAKICHI AS WELL.

I WILL NOT HOLD ANY FORMAL SPEECHES
I WILL BE HAPPY IF YOU SPEND THIS EVENING REMEMBERING SAKICHI.
.....
IS IT REAL-LY...?
IS THIS REALLY FOR THE REPOSE OF SAKICHI-SAN'S SOUL?
TO ME IT SEEMS TO BE
FOR THE REPOSE OF YOUR SOUL, TOKIWA-SAN
OF COURSE IT IS?

MANZOU-KUN?
IT'S JUST THAT FOR A MOMENT, I FELT AS IF TOKIWA-SAN PLANS TO BE BURIED TOGETHER WITH SAKICHI-SAN.
IT LOOKS TO ME AS THE SCENE OF A FAREWELL WITH YOU, TOKIWA-SAN.
OR AM I WRONG?
THERE'S SUCH A THING AS BEING TIRED OF LIVING, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
IT'S TRUE THAT MANY MISFORTUNES HAPPENED AND HE HAS BEEN HORRIBLY DEPRESSED, BUT...

THERE'S NOTHING SADDER THAN BEING LEFT ALONE AFTER PEOPLE'S PASSING.
THERE WOULD BE NOTHING STRANGE IF TOKIWA-SAN FELT LIKE THAT.
I... UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT...
THINGS LIKE INHERITANCE AND SO ON ARE TRIFLES.
JUST THINKING PEOPLE MAY HAVE DIED FOR SUCH REASONS MAKES ME HATE THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE.
YOU WERE SO SADDENED BY NAOSHI'S PASSING, TOKIWA-SAN DON'T YOU THINK THE SAME?
REALLY...

I'M SURE HE DID THAT TO NAOSHI-TOO...
THAT PERSON MUST BE LAUGHING SO HARD RIGHT NOW.
WHO COULD HAVE DONE SUCH A THING TO SAKICHI...?
IT'S JUST AS YOU SAY, O-CHIYO-SAN.
DON'T YOU THINK SO, KIKUE-SAN?
WHATEVER YOU SAY.

O-CHIYO-SAMA.
YOU SHAME-LESS—
IT WASN'T KIKUE-SAN.
NO, I'M SURE THAT WOMAN—
PLEASE, STOP
I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGER, BUT IT'S NO USE TAKING IT OUT ON KIKUE-SAN.
SHE DIDN'T KILL EITHER NAOSHI-SAN OR SAKICHI-SAN.

I THINK I PROBABLY KNOW WHO THE CRIMINAL IS
I'M SORRY TO BRING THIS UP AT A WAKE, BUT...

THE DAY NAOSHI-SAN WAS PUSHED FROM THE PAGODA,
THE LADY WATCHING THE TOWER SAW A NEWS SELLER ENTER IT AT SUNSET WITH A WOODEN BOX.
STRANGE AND FANTASTIC NEWS
HE CLIMBED UP, LEFT THE BOX INSIDE AND CAME OUT.
AFTER NIGHT FELL,
NAOSHI-SAN ENTERED THE PAGODA
AFTER HIM, TOKIWA-SAN AND SAKICHI-SAN.
AND AFTER THEM, THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER ENTERED

NAOSHI-SAN FELL FROM THE PAGODA.
ONLY TOKIWA-SAN AND SAKICHI-SAN WENT OUT OF IT
BUT PEOPLE CANNOT JUST DISAPPEAR
AND YES, THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER NEVER CAME OUT
THEREFORE, ONE OF THE THREE WHO ENTERED CLIMBED BACK OUT THROUGH THE ROOFS OF THE PAGODA,
CHANGED INTO A DISGUISE AND ENTERED ONCE MORE
I HAD THE CHANCE TO TAIL THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER ONCE

I CHASED HIM INTO A SMALL BY-ALLEY
HOWEVER, THERE I SAW NOT HIM, BUT THE NEWS SELLER
DON'T YOU THINK IT MEANS HE CHANGED HIS KIMONO IN THE ALLEY AND BECAME THE NEWS SELLER?
WHICH MEANS THE SAME THING COULD HAVE HAPPENED AT THE PAGODA, TOO
ACTUALLY, THIS NEWS SELLER IS SEEN IN THE VICINITY EVERY TIME THE FLAMING DEMON MAKES AN APPEARANCE.
IF WE SAY THAT THE FLAMING DEMON IS NOT A MONSTER BUT A HUMAN BEING,
THEN THE HAND PRINTS ARE BURNED WITH A BRANDING IRON
CARRYING A BRAZIER AND A BRANDING IRON MAKES UP FOR A PRETTY BULKY LUGGAGE.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE FLAMING DEMON ROAMS THE STREETS OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL SOMETIMES AS THE NEWS SELLER, SOMETIMES AS THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER
THE NEWS SELLER BIG BOX IS PERFECT
FOR CARRYING ALL THIS AROUND
BUT IF WE AGREE THAT THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER WAS ONE OF THOSE THREE MEN, WE GET TO SOMETHING UNEXPECTED.
DUE TO HIS SMALL STATURE, SAKICHI-SAN COULD NOT BE THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER
THE SELLER ALSO APPEARED AFTER NAOSHI-SAN WAS ALREADY DEAD, SO IT COULDN'T BE NAOSHI-SAN, TOO.

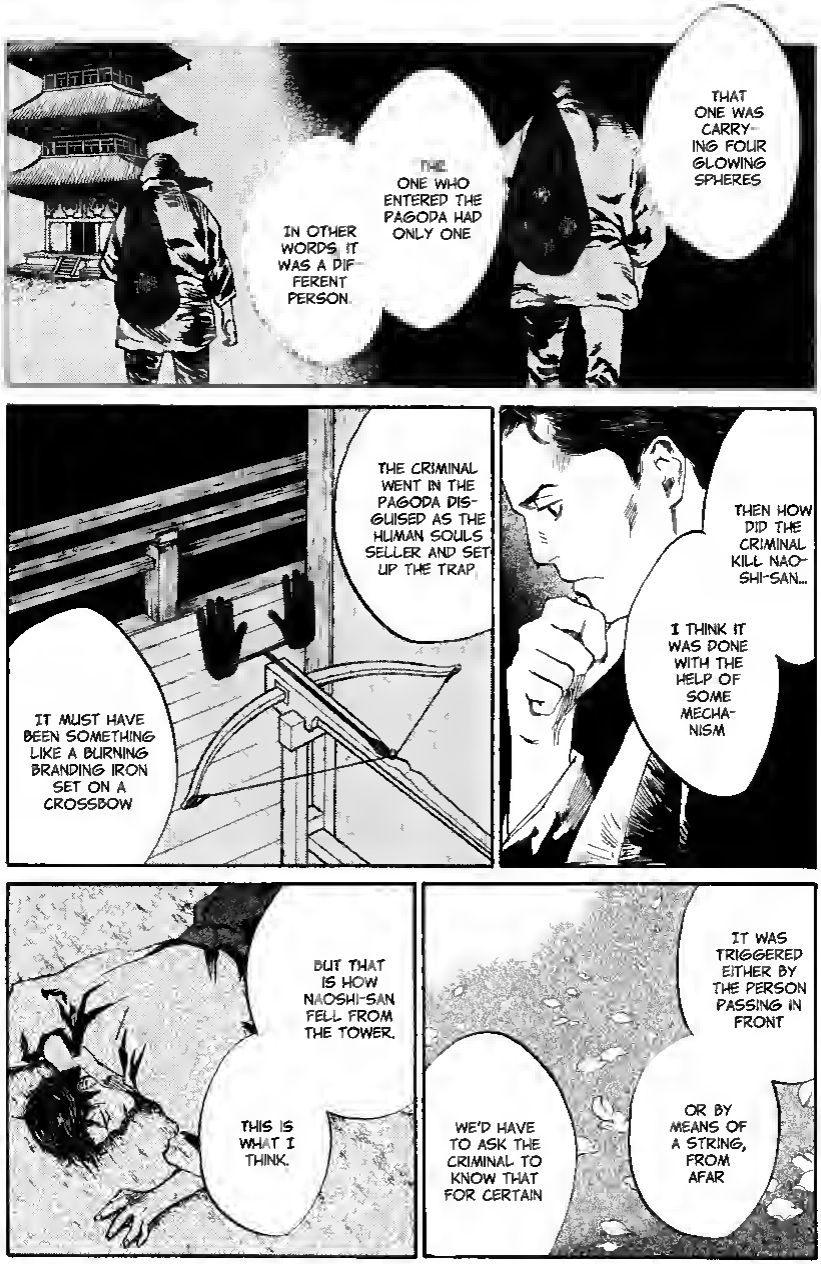
NO.
IMPOS-
SIBLE... IS
IT TOKIWA-
SAN?
WHEN I MET
THE HUMAN SOULS
SELLER, TOKIWA-SAN
WAS TOGETHER WITH
MANZOU-KUN AT THE
PRINCIPAL HOUSE
HEH
BUT HE APPEARED,
WHICH MEANS THE
SELLER DISAPPEARED
INTO THIN AIR
THEN LOGIC TELLS US
THAT IF THE SELLER
WASN'T THERE, THEN
NEITHER WAS THE
FLAMING
DEMON.
IN THAT CASE, IT
SEEMS AS IF THE
SELLER WAS
NOBODY.

NO.
THERE'S NO SUCH THINGS AS GHOSTS IN THIS WORLD.
AND THERE'S ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO THINK.
THEN NAOSHI-SAN WAS ENCHANTED BY A GHOSTLY MONSTER
THAT THE FLAMING DEMON WAS NOT IN THE PAGODA.
!
HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE CRIMINAL WAS THINKING.
THE TRUTH IS THAT WHEN I MET NAOSHI-SAN BEFORE THE INCIDENT AT THE PAGODA,

TOKIWA-SAN WENT TO THE PAGODA BECAUSE HE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM NAOSHI-SAN
NAO-SHI DID SUCH A THING...
IT PROBABLY HAPPENED IN THE CHIROU HALL.
AND HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO STOP THE CRIMINAL.
YES...
THAT IS CORRECT, RIGHT, TOKIWA-SAN?
BUT FELL HIMSELF INSTEAD.
HE WAS GOING TO KILL HIM.
WHAT WAS NAOSHI-SAN GOING TO DO THAT HE CALLED TOKIWA-SAN, TOO?

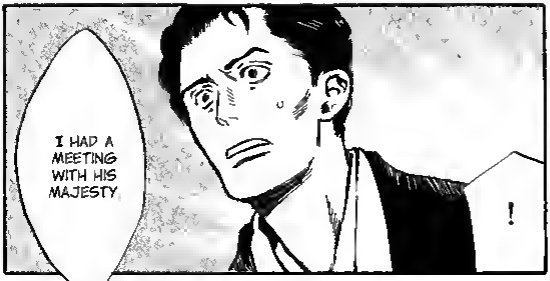
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
OR BECAUSE HE WANTED TO USE HIM TO CAPTURE THE CRIMINAL WHEN THEY CAME TO ATTACK TOKIWA-SAN.
JUDGING FROM HIS WORDS, IT WAS EITHER BECAUSE HE THOUGHT TOKIWA-SAN WAS THE CRIMINAL
THAT'S NOT SO
!
OR MAYBE BOTH OF THEM..
RIGHT FROM THE START, WE DIDN'T KNOW IF THE INTENDED TARGET WAS NAOSHI-SAN OR TOKIWA-SAN.
AND TRIED TO LAY A TRAP.
I THINK NAOSHI-SAN THOUGHT THE CRIMINAL WAS AFTER TOKIWA-SAN

IF THE CRIMINAL WHO WAS AFTER NAOSHI-SAN SAW TOKIWA-SAN ALL ALONE AT THE PAGODA INSTEAD, THEY WOULD DEFINITELY ATTACK, RIGHT?
NAOSHI-SAN CALLED OUT TOKIWA-SAN AND LET THE CRIMINAL KNOW IT
OR ELSE HE WAS CALLED OUT BY THE CRIMINAL AND IN TURN, HE CALLED TOKIWA-SAN, TOO
IN ORDER TO SECURE THE SCENE, NAOSHI-SAN ENTERED THE PAGODA FIRST.
USING THE ROOFS, HE WENT BACK DOWN, DISGUISED HIMSELF AS THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER AND ENTERED AGAIN.
I THINK HE EXPECTED THE CRIMINAL TO BE WATCHING SECRETLY FROM SOMEWHERE.
THEN HE PROBABLY REMEMBERED THE STORIES ABOUT THE SELLER THAT HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING LATELY AND USED THAT DISGUISE
ACTUALLY, THAT DAY THE REAL HUMAN SOULS SELLER APPEARED IN ASAKUSA AFTER THE INCIDENT

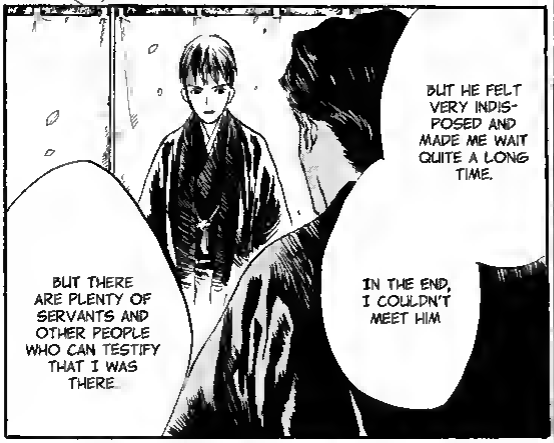

THAT ONE WAS CARRYING FOUR GLOWING SPHERES
THE ONE WHO ENTERED THE PAGODA HAD ONLY ONE
IN OTHER WORDS, IT WAS A DIFFERENT PERSON.
THE CRIMINAL WENT IN THE PAGODA DISGUISED AS THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER AND SET UP THE TRAP.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING LIKE A BURNING BRANDING IRON SET ON A CROSSBOW
THEN HOW DID THE CRIMINAL KILL NAOSHI-SAN...
I THINK IT WAS DONE WITH THE HELP OF SOME MECHANISM
BUT THAT IS HOW NAOSHI-SAN FELL FROM THE TOWER.
THIS IS WHAT I THINK.
IT WAS TRIGGERED EITHER BY THE PERSON PASSING IN FRONT
OR BY MEANS OF A STRING, FROM AFAR
WE'D HAVE TO ASK THE CRIMINAL TO KNOW THAT FOR CERTAIN

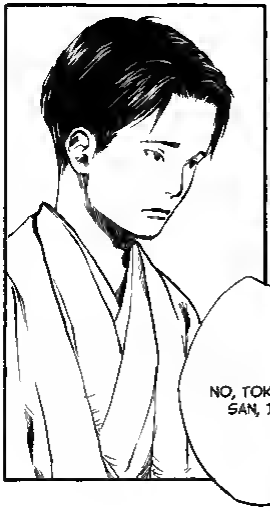
BUT TOKIWA-SAN SAID NAOSHI-SAN WAS ATTACKED
BY THE FLAMING DEMON
YES.
IN THE PAGODA, HE PROBABLY LEARNED FROM NAOSHI-SAN WHO THE CRIMINAL WAS
SO WEREN'T THEY SOMEONE THAT TOKIWA-SAN TRIED TO PROTECT WITHOUT EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT?
AND ANOTHER THING. WOMEN ARE PROHIB-ITED FROM ENTERING THE PAGODA
I WONDER IF IT'S EVEN POSSIBLE TO CONSTRUCT SUCH A MECHANISM

AND THE BRANDING IRON WILL COOL DOWN IN NO TIME
HOW WILL IT TAKE AIM?
THAT'S...
SUCH BASIC CONTRAPTIONS ARE TOO CRUDE TO USE...
.....
I'VE HEARD OF A BRANDING IRON LAYING AROUND ONLY IN NAOSHI'S CASE HOW WERE THEY GOING TO GET IT BACK?
BESIDES, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MECHANISM AFTERWARDS?
WHERE?
THE DAY NAOSHI DIED, I WAS IN A CERTAIN PLACE.
IT'S NOT ME.
BUT YOU'RE STILL THE CRIMINAL!
I DON'T AGREE WITH YOUR VIEWS


I HAD A MEETING WITH HIS MAJESTY
!

THE IMPERIAL PALACE


BUT HE FELT VERY INDISPOSED AND MADE ME WAIT QUITE A LONG TIME.
IN THE END, I COULDN'T MEET HIM
BUT THERE ARE PLENTY OF SERVANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO CAN TESTIFY THAT I WAS THERE...

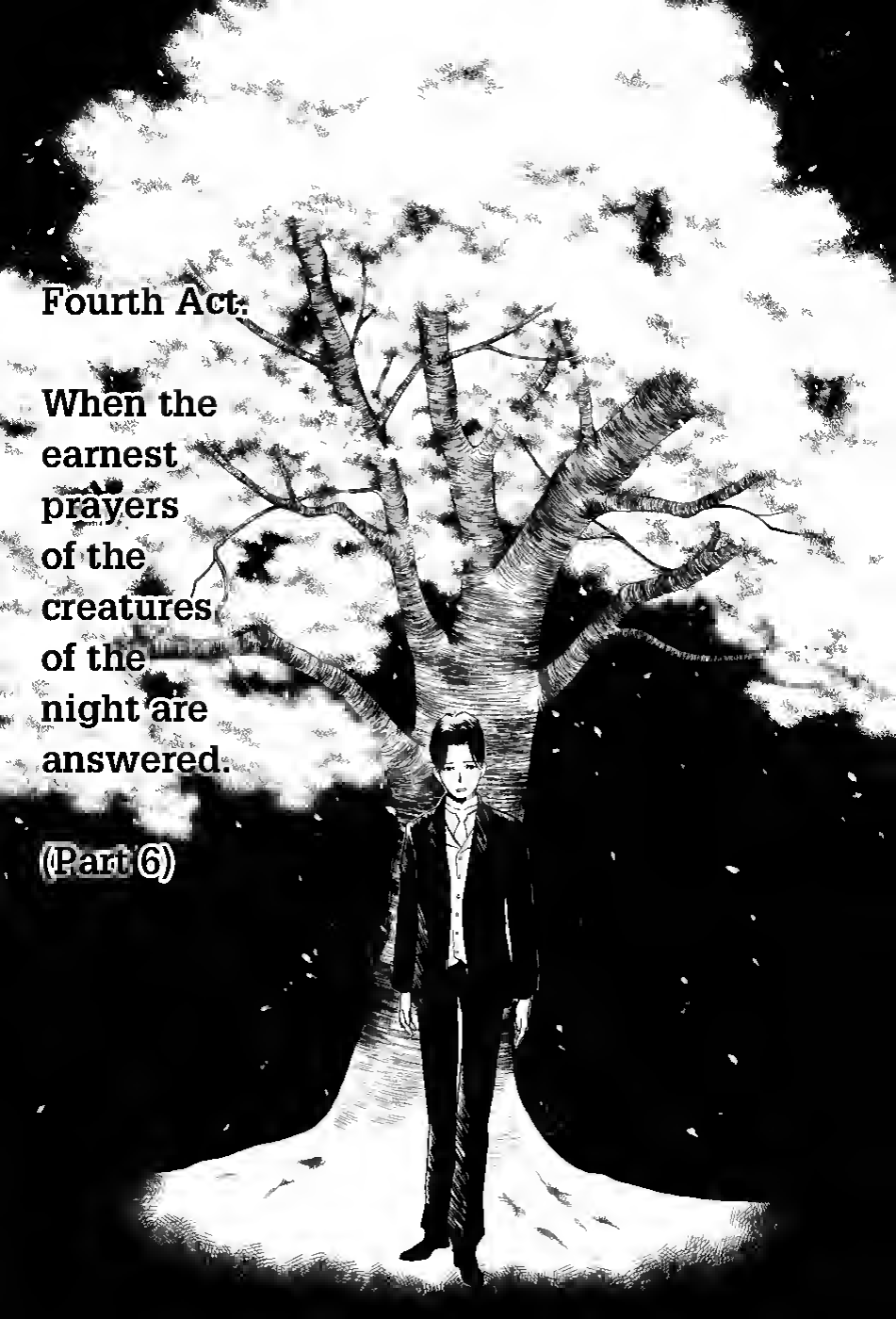

NO, TOKIWA-SAN, I...!

IT SEEMS YOU PUT SOME REALLY EARNEST THOUGHT INTO THIS
THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART...

IMPOSSIBLE...

I'M SORRY,
BUT WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT OF RUDENESS, I'D LIKE TO ASK SOMETHING, O-TAE-SAN.
I'VE BEEN VERY RUDE...
I'M SURE IT DOESN'T BOTHER TASUKU.
PLEASE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT
?
YES?
TOKIWA-SAN KEEPS THREE DOGS
TWO OF THEM ARE AKITA DOGS WHAT IS THE THIRD?
IT'S... EHM...
SHEPHERD IT'S A GERMAN BREED.
EH?
IS THAT A BREED WITH A STRAIGHT TAIL, RESEMBLING A WOLF OR A FOX...?
YES, IT LOOKS MORE LIKE A FOX THAN A DOG
THE HEAD AND THE BACK ARE BLACK, TOO...

THE BELLY IS.. FOX-COLORED..
THAT'S THE REAL THING BEHIND YAMIGOZEN'S BLACK FOX TRANSFORMA-TION.


Fourth Act:
When the earnest prayers of the creatures of the night are answered.
(Part 6)

THE BEAST YAMIGOZEN CONTROLS IS THE DOG THAT'S USED TO TOKIWA-SAN...
AND TOKIWA-SAN ONLY.
AND YAMIGOZEN, WHO CONTROLS THAT LARGE, RARE WESTERN BRED DOG IS...

TOKIWA-SAN.
YAMIGO-ZEN IS AN AKAHIME WITH THICK WHITE MAKEUP.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S A WOMAN
NAOSHI-SAN PROVED THAT THE CLAWS ARE FAKE AT THE CHIROU HALL.
THE ATTIRE AND THE WIG WERE HIDDEN IN THE HANNYA SOBA STAND THAT'S ALWAYS SEEN NEAR THE PLACES WHERE YAMIGOZEN APPEARS.

BUT...
BUT TOKIWA-SAN WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN
YES
TOKIWA-SAN LEFT AFTER 10 P.M.
HE WAS ATTACKED RIGHT AFTER THAT.
IT WASN'T HIM.
...
ARE YOU TRYING TO PROTECT TOKIWA-SAN?
EVEN THOUGH YOU ASSOCIATED SO FREELY WITH THE RELATIVES BACKING UP NAOSHI-SAN?
!
SOMETHING O-TAE-SAN SAID MADE ME THINK IN THAT DIRECTION.
IF TOKIWA-SAN BECAME A DUKE, THERE'S NOT A SLITHER OF HOPE FOR YOU TO BECOME HIS WIFE, KIKUE-SAN
IT WAS RUDE OF ME, BUT I TALKED TO YOUR OLD SERVANT ABOUT WHY YOU WERE SO PARTICULAR ABOUT THAT INHERITANCE, THEN.

SHE CONFIRMED THAT PEOPLE, BEARING THE NAMES TAKATSUKASA, KUJOU, NAKAHATA AND SO ON HAVE BEEN VISITING YOU OFTEN AND YOU'VE SPOKEN WITH THEM QUITE AMICABLY.
IF THE TALKS WERE SO AMICABLE, THEN YOU COULDN'T HAVE BEEN FORCING YOU TO BREAK UP WITH TOKIWA-SAN, RIGHT?
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT WHAT ABOUT IT IS ILLEGAL?
THEY PROMISED ME A HOARD OF MONEY IF I KEPT CLINGING TO TOKIWA-SAN LIKE THIS.
NO NOBILITY WILL SO MUCH AS THING OF LETTING A GEISHA MARRY INTO AN ARISTO-CRATIC FAMILY
EVEN IF I BECOME JUST A CONCUBINE, I KNOW VERY WELL HOW BADLY PEOPLE WILL TALK.
WE WERE MEANT TO PART SOONER OR LATER, ANYWAY, SO...
BESIDES, TOKIWA-SAN SAID HE DIDN'T NEED THE INHERITANCE ANYWAY.
SO WHAT'S SO WRONG
ABOUT TAKING THAT MONEY?

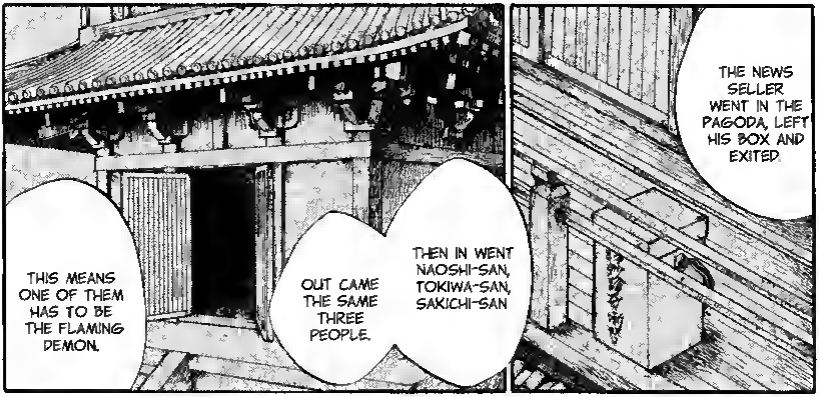
KIKUE-SAN,
AT WHAT TIME DID TOKIWA-SAN GO HOME?
AFTER 10. I'M SURE.
WAIT.
NO MATTER WHAT KIKUE-SAN SAYS, NOBODY NEEDS TO BELIEVE HER.
NO, IT WAS AFTER 10.
THE TRUTH IS THAT LATELY, TOKIWA-SAN HAD BEEN GROWING COLD TOWARDS ME.
THERE HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN ANY LETTERS.
AND HE HAD SOMEONE ELSE HE WAS VISITING BESIDES ME, RIGHT FROM THE START...
HALF THE TIMES EVERYONE THOUGHT HE WAS IN MY HOUSE, HE ACTUALLY WASN'T.
SO YES, I HATE TOKIWA-SAN.
BUT EVEN SO, I SAY HE LEFT AFTER 10.
THERE'S NO BETTER WITNESS THAN MYSELF...

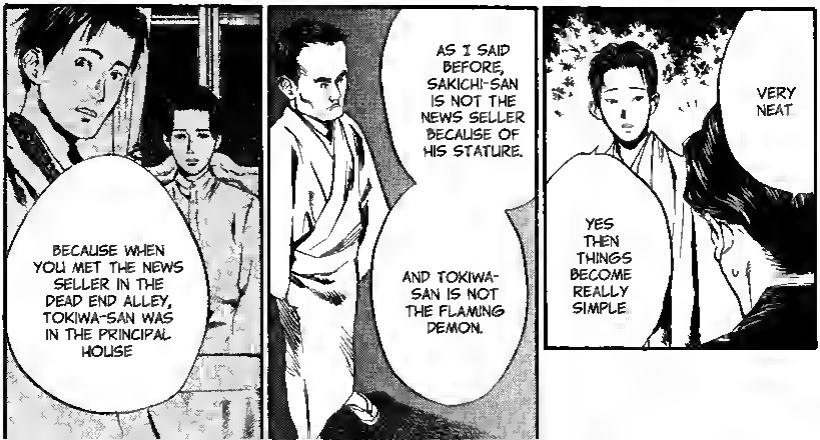
HE WASN'T SEEING ANOTHER WOMAN, KIKUE-SAN
SO OF COURSE, TOKIWA-SAN HAD A HIDEOUT SOMEWHERE.
HE PASSED BY IT FIRST AND THEN WENT WANDERING THROUGH THE NIGHT.
BUT HE COULDN'T BRING THE SOBA STAND AT HOME.
THE ATTIRE AND THE WIG WERE IN THE SOBA STAND.
.....
YES. I THINK SO.
... TOKIWA-SAN... LEFT KIKUE-SAN'S HOUSE AT AN EARLIER TIME, RIGHT?
THAT TIME, PEOPLE CHASED AN ANIMAL THEY HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
THE DOG RAN AND THEY GAVE CHASE
IN THE END, IT CAME TO TOKIWA-SAN.

HE MUST HAVE BEEN SURPRISED.
WHAT WOULD THEY THINK IF AFTER CHASING A SUSPICIOUS DOG THEY REACHED AN EVEN MORE SUSPICIOUS SOBA SELLER WITH A HANNYA MASK?
IT WOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM IF IT WERE JUST THE DOG, BUT HE COULD HEAR THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE CHASING IT.
SO HE MADE THE DOG RUN FORWARD, CUT HIS OWN HAND WITH HIS WEAPON,
TURNED AROUND THE CORNER AND RUN TOWARDS THE PEOPLE.
THE TRAIL OF BLOOD DROPS ON THE ROAD
DIDN'T COME FROM THE CLAWS OF THE APPARITION UNTIL THEY BOTH DISAPPEARED.
THAT WAS THE PLACE IT STARTED.
IT WAS NOTED THAT TOKIWA-SAN WAS, UNEXPECTEDLY, WEARING A KIMONO THAT DAY.
IT HAD TO BE A KIMONO
BECAUSE THERE ARE NO SOBA SELLERS WITH WESTERN STYLE CLOTHES

TOKIWA-SAN...
WAS YAMIGOZEN...
THEN...
IS THE FLAMING DEMON TOKIWA-SAN, TOO? DID HE KILL NAOSHI-SAN, TOO?
PLEASE, THINK ABOUT THE INCIDENT WHEN NAOSHI-SAN DIED
AND REMEMBER WHAT YOU JUST SAID
"THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER DIDN'T JUST DISAPPEAR.
BUT NONE OF THE THREE MEN ARE THE CRIMINAL."
SO I THOUGHT
YOU...
WHAT IF THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER
WASN'T HUMAN...?
IF HE WASN'T HUMAN BUT A MONSTER TAKING ON A HUMAN SHAPE,
HE COULD DISAPPEAR ANYWHERE HE LIKED WITHOUT A PROBLEM.

THEN HE SIMPLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE PAGODA, TOO, BEING A MONSTER.
THEN THERE'S NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO SELLERS.
WHEN YOU CHASED HIM, ALL YOU FOUND WAS THE NEWS SELLER.
TRY IMAGINING THAT THE HUMAN SOULS SELLER DISAPPEARED AND THE NEWS SELLER JUST HAPPENED TO BE THERE.


THE NEWS SELLER WENT IN THE PAGODA, LEFT HIS BOX AND EXITED.
THEN IN WENT NAOSHI-SAN, TOKIWA-SAN, SAKICHI-SAN
OUT CAME THE SAME THREE PEOPLE.
THIS MEANS ONE OF THEM HAS TO BE THE FLAMING DEMON.


VERY NEAT.
YES THEN THINGS BECOME REALLY SIMPLE.
AS I SAID BEFORE, SAKICHI-SAN IS NOT THE NEWS SELLER BECAUSE OF HIS STATURE.
AND TOKIWA-SAN IS NOT THE FLAMING DEMON.
BECAUSE WHEN YOU MET THE NEWS SELLER IN THE DEAD END ALLEY, TOKIWA-SAN WAS IN THE PRINCIPAL HOUSE

IN THAT CASE, THE NEWS-SELLER, IN OTHER WORDS THE FLAMING DEMON,
COULD HAVE BEEN ONLY NAOSHI-SAN.
BUT...
NO...
BUT NAOSHI-SAN FELL FROM THE PAGODA AND DIED
THE ONLY EXPLANATION THAT PRESENTS ITSELF
IS THAT NAOSHI-SAN, THE FLAMING DEMON,
WANTED TO PUSH TOKIWA-SAN OFF THE PAGODA BUT FELL HIMSELF.
BUT...!
THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED AFTER NAOSHI WAS DEAD, TOO.
THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT AT LEAST AS FOR THE PAGODA INCIDENT, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYONE ELSE BUT HIM BEING THE FLAMING DEMON.
BUT THEN WHO IS THE FLAMING DEMON THAT APPEARED AFTER NAOSHI-SAN WAS DEAD?
AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY..

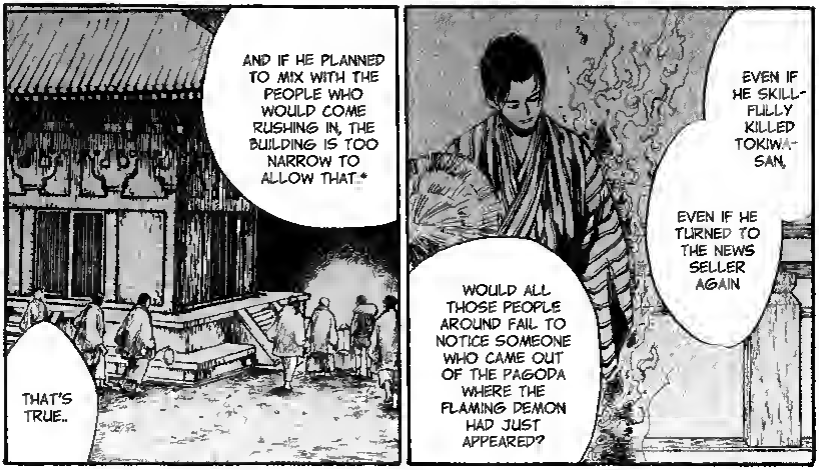
AND STRUGGLED WITH NAOSHI-SAN?
WHY DID TOKIWA-SAN TESTIFY THAT THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED
SOMETHING HAPPENED BETWEEN THE THREE PEOPLE WHO CLIMBED THE PAGODA.
SAKICHI-SAN WAS THERE AND WAS THEREFORE A WITNESS.
IT'S THAT SAKICHI-SAN WAS MURDERED AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME.
BUT MANZOU-KUN...
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT BOTHERED ME AT THIS POINT.
BUT NO MATTER WHAT SAKICHI KNEW
WHY DID TOKIWA-SAN HAD TO KILL HIM?
THAT WITNESS WAS KILLED BY YAMIGOZEN
AND YAMIGOZEN IS TOKIWA-SAN.

SAKICHI-SAN HAD TO DIE
BECAUSE TOKIWA-SAN WAS TRYING TO PROTECT NAOSHI-SAN.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
HE WAS THE LAST PERSON TO SAY ANYTHING HARMFUL TO TOKIWA-SAN.
AS I SAID, THE FLAMING DEMON WAS NAOSHI-SAN.
IN THE END, EVERYONE STARTED SAYING THAT TOKIWA-SAN KILLED NAOSHI-SAN AND STOLE HIS INHERITANCE
SAKICHI-SAN MUST HAVE ITCHED TO TELL THE TRUTH.
BUT TOKIWA-SAN TESTIFIED THAT THE FLAMING DEMON HAD KILLED NAOSHI-SAN
SAKICHI-SAN CONFIRMED.

FOR TOKIWA-SAN'S SAKE, SAKICHI WAS AS SILENT AS THE GRAVE,
BUT IT WAS DOUBTFUL WHETHER HE WOULD KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT FOR NAOSHI-SAN'S SAKE.
THAT IS EXACTLY WHY SAKICHI-SAN HAD TO DIE.
NOW THAT WE'VE ESTABLISHED THAT, BACK TO THE LAST APPEARANCE OF THE FLAMING DEMON
A WOMAN FROM A PUBLIC TEA HOUSE WAS KILLED THE SAME DAY AS SAKICHI-SAN
WASN'T THAT A LITTLE STRANGE?
IN OTHER WORDS, IT WAS DONE BY SOMEONE PRETENDING TO BE THE FLAMING DEMON
OF COURSE, IT WAS A FARCE STAGED BY TOKIWA-SAN TO MAKE EVERYONE BELIEVE THE DEMON APPEARED AFTER NAOSHI-SAN WAS DEAD, TOO.
THAT'S..
SHE WAS PUSHED FROM A HEIGHT, WHICH IS USUAL,
BUT THERE WERE NO BRANDING MARKS AND SHE WAS KILLED WITH A SHARP BLADE

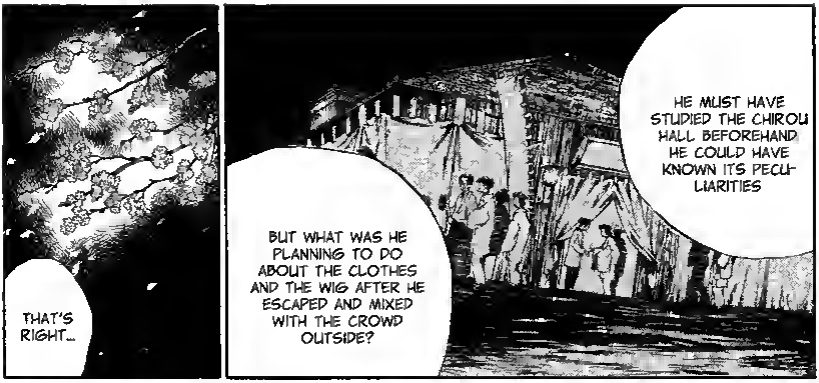
AND I WAS SURE TOKIWA-SAN AND NAOSHI-SAN
WERE THE LEAST LIKELY TO-
WAS IT FOR THE INHERI-TANCE...?
HE LOOKED SO UNFAZED BY IT, AND YET WE'RE COMING BACK TO THAT...?
WHY DID YOU GO THIS FAR?
DID YOU HAVE TO PROTECT NAOSHI-SAMA SO BADLY AS TO KILL SAKICHI?
WAIT A MINUTE.
DON'T YOU THINK THE TWO CASES WHERE THEY ATTACKED EACH OTHER ARE A LITTLE STRANGE?
EH?
AT THE TIME OF THE PAGODA INCIDENT, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN MANY PEOPLE COME TO SEE THE SAKURA AT NIGHT, BELOW THE PAGODA.

*NOTE THE STAIRCASES, WALKS AND BALCONIES INSIDE ANY PAGODA ARE BARELY WIDE ENOUGH TO LET ONE PERSON PASS

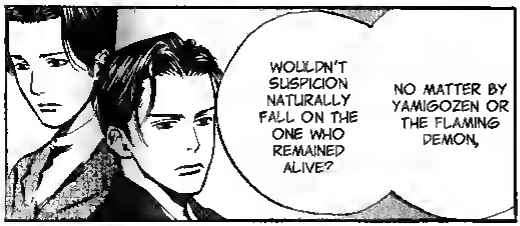

AND IF HE PLANNED TO MIX WITH THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD COME RUSHING IN, THE BUILDING IS TOO NARROW TO ALLOW THAT.*
THAT'S TRUE..
EVEN IF HE SKILL-FULLY KILLED TOKIWA-SAN,
EVEN IF HE TURNED TO THE NEWS SELLER AGAIN
WOULD ALL THOSE PEOPLE AROUND FAIL TO NOTICE SOMEONE WHO CAME OUT OF THE PAGODA WHERE THE FLAMING DEMON HAD JUST APPEARED?

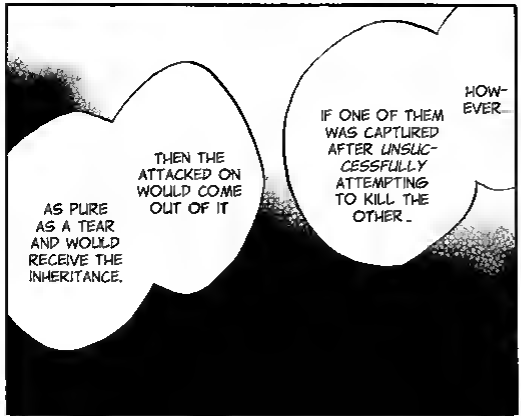
IN THAT CASE, NAOSHI-SAN NEVER LEFT HIMSELF AN OPENING TO ESCAPE.
HE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED SAKICHI-SAN TO FOLLOW TOKIWA-SAN EVEN IF HE ASKED HIM TO COME ALONE
BESIDES, WITH THE RECENT DISTUR-BANCES

ALSO, UNLIKE BEFORE, IN THIS CASE THERE WAS NO DOG TO DISTRACT ATTEN-TION OR A SOBA SELLER
BUT TOKIWA-SAN KNEW THERE WOULD BE TWO OF THEM BEFORE-HAND.
IN THAT CASE, IF EITHER OF THEM ESCAPED, THEY'D CALL HELP IMMEDI-ATELY.
ON THE OTHER HAND, IN THE CHIROU HALL INCIDENT, NAOSHI-SAN WAS TOGE-THER WITH MARINO-SAN


HE MUST HAVE STUDIED THE CHIROU HALL BEFOREHAND. HE COULD HAVE KNOWN ITS PECULIARITIES
BUT WHAT WAS HE PLANNING TO DO ABOUT THE CLOTHES AND THE WIG AFTER HE ESCAPED AND MIXED WITH THE CROWD OUTSIDE?
THAT'S RIGHT...

!
IF NAOSHI-SAN OR TOKIWA-SAN ARE KILLED


WOULDN'T SUSPICION NATURALLY FALL ON THE ONE WHO REMAINED ALIVE?
NO MATTER BY YAMIGOZEN OR THE FLAMING DEMON,


HOWEVER...
IF ONE OF THEM WAS CAPTURED AFTER *UNSUCCESSFULLY* ATTEMPTING TO KILL THE OTHER.
THEN THE ATTACKED ON WOULD COME OUT OF IT
AS PURE AS A TEAR AND WOULD RECEIVE THE INHERITANCE.

NEITHER OF THE TWO BROTHERS HAD ANY INTENTION TO ESCAPE

THESE INCIDENTS OCCURRED BECAUSE BOTH BROTHERS WERE TRYING TO MAKE AS CERTAIN AS POSSIBLE THAT THE INHERITANCE WOULD GO TO THE OTHER ONE
THAT'S WHAT BOTH OF THEM WERE AFTER.
WHAT A MESS...
WHEN YOU THINK OF IT THIS WAY, IT'S PERFECTLY CLEAR WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FLAMING DEMON ATTACKED SAKICHI-SAN
HE WAS MISTAKEN FOR KIKUE-SAN
THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO USED KIKUE-SAN AS A PRETEXT
TO GIVE THE INHERITANCE TO NAOSHI-SAN THAT'S WHY HE WANTED TO GET RID OF HER FOR TOKIWA-SAN'S SAKE.
ONCE HE LEFT AZABU, NAOSHI SAN HEADED STRAIGHT TO IZAWA-YA ON GINZA
THE SAKICHI INCIDENT WAS THE ONLY TIME WHEN THE FLAMING DEMON
DIDN'T USE FLAMES HE OBVIOUSLY REFRAINED FROM IT

IN THE END, HE PUSHED SAKICHI-SAN, BUT HE HESITATED
HE MADE SURE SAKICHI WENT THROUGH THE CANOPY BELOW WHEN HE FELL.
IF HE WAS DOING THIS FOR TOKIWA-SAN'S SAKE,
THEN HE WANTED SAKICHI TO REMAIN ALIVE BUT HE HAD A GOAL AND FOR THAT, THE VICTIM JUST HAD TO DIE...
THAT WAS BECAUSE HALFWAY THROUGH IT, HE REALIZED HE HAD ATTACKED
THE WRONG PERSON IT WASN'T KIKUE-SAN.
AND AT THE CHIROU HALL, NAOSHI-SAN REALIZED THAT YAMIGOZEN WAS TOKIWA-SAN.
THAT'S HOW HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS THINKING.
HE FASTEST AND MOST CERTAIN WAY TO GIVE THE INHERITANCE TO THE OTHER BROTHER WAS TO DIE...
BUT IN CASE OF A SUICIDE, THE ONE WHO REMAINED ALIVE WOULD EVENTUALLY BE SUSPECTED OF DRIVING THE DECEASED ONE TO THE WALL AND TO SUICIDE.
HE MEANT THAT HE WILL ACCOMPLISH HIS GOAL AND THE TRAGEDY WOULD BE OVER.
NAOSHI-SAN SAID HE WOULD STOP IT
HE MEANT.

BUT THEY COULDN'T HAVE THAT
BOTH OF THEM WANTED TO GIVE THE INHERITANCE TO THE OTHER WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST STAIN FROM RUMORS.
THAT'S WHY TOKIWA-SAN GAVE A FALSE STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE FLAMING DEMON ATTACKED NAOSHI-SAN.
ALSO...
HE PROBABLY ARRANGED HIS SPARE WOODEN BOX AND A HALF-DONE DOLL IN HIS HOUSE, TOO.
NAOSHI-SAN ATTACKED TOKIWA-SAN, PRETENDED TO SLIP IN THE STRUGGLE AND FELL FROM THE PAGODA.
HE LEFT BEHIND THE BRANDING IRON AND THE DOLL
HE MUST HAVE BEEN CONVINCED THAT TOKIWA-SAN WOULD GIVE A TRUE STATEMENT THAT HE WAS ATTACKED BY HIS OWN OLDER BROTHER.
BUT...
TOKIWA-SAN HID ALL THE THINGS LEFT AT THE PAGODA.

TOKIWA-SAN DIDN'T WANT THE INHERITANCE
HE WANTED TO GIVE IT TO NAOSHI-SAN.
BUT NAOSHI-SAN WAS THINKING THE SAME THING.
ONLY HE PUT IT INTO ACTION FIRST.
IF WE THINK OF THE SITUATION UP THERE, THE DOLL MUST NOT HAVE BEEN ON FIRE
TOKIWA-SAN SET IT ON FIRE AND ARRANGED ON A FALSE VERSION OF THE EVENTS WITH SAKICHI-SAN.
THE INHERITANCE TOKIWA-SAN WAS PLANNING ON GIVING TO NAOSHI-SAN REBOUNDED BACK TO HIM
IT WAS A FAREWELL GIFT TO THE OLDER BROTHER WHO HAD STRAYED DOWN A ROAD OF NO RETURN
THE LIES TOKIWA-SAN TOLD AND THE FLAMING DEMON THAT APPEARED LATER
WERE MEANT TO CLEAR NAOSHI-SAN'S NAME OF EVEN THE SMALLEST STAIN.

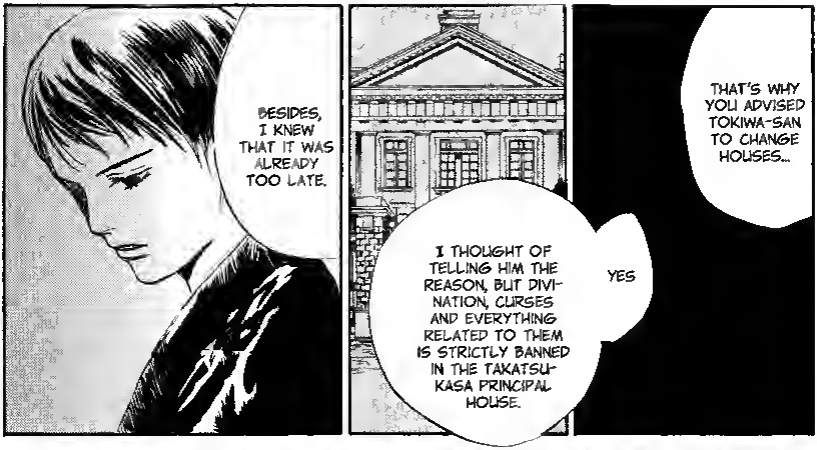
I'M SURE YAMIGOZEN WAS GOING TO MAKE A NEW APPEARANCE AND TRY TO KILL AGAIN
BUT THIS TIME SHE WOULD FAIL AND THE RIGHTFUL HEIR NAOSHI-SAN WOULD CAPTURE HER..
OR ELSE SHE WOULD COMMIT SUICIDE.
AND THEN WE WOULD HAVE AN EXTRAORDINARILY EVIL VILLAIN WHO WANTED THE INHERITANCE SO BADLY
HE KILLED HIS OWN OLDER BROTHER AND EVEN MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE.
THAT'S WHY THIS IS A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR TOKIWA-SAN HIMSELF.
IT'S A FAREWELL DINNER FOR ALL OF YOU.
PLEASE..

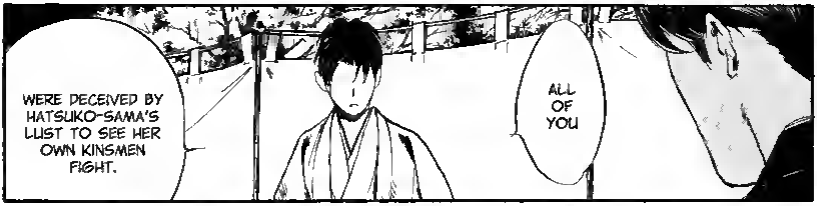
I UNDERSTAND...
BUT... PLEASE, GIVE US TIME TO THINK OVER THIS MATTER INSIDE THE FAMILY FIRST...
NO, I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO CLOSE YOUR EYES TO THE CRIMES COMMITTED.
PLEASE, KEEP ALL THIS A SECRET...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
I PROMISE NOT TO PUBLISH ANYTHING, YET
WE'LL KEEP SILENT FOR THE TIME BEING.
BUT YOU WILL MOST PROBABLY INHERIT IT.
FROM NOW ON, THIS FAMILY'S NAME WILL BEAR HEAVY STAINS,
TASUKU...

TOKIWA-SAN...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, REALLY.
YOU TRIED TO PROTECT SOMEONE LIKE ME...
.....
ALL RIGHT.
YES.
I THINK BOTH TOKIWA-SAN AND NAOSHI-SAN ARE THE VICTIMS IN THIS.

WHAT IS AN INHERITANCE... WHAT IS A HOUSE?
THESE ARE VENGEFUL GHOSTS OF THE FEUDAL ERA.
THEY ARE MEANINGLESS, ONLY TORTURING THE PEOPLE.
IT'S ALL LADY HATSUKO'S FAULT... SHE SOWED THE SEEDS OF DISCORD WITH HER OWN HANDS.
WHAT FAULT DID SHE FIND WITH AN ELEVEN YEARS OLD NAOSHI-SAN?!
.....
IT'S EXACTLY AS YOU SAY
ON FATHER'S DEATHBED,
HATSUKO-SAMA MADE ONE PREDICTION OF THE FUTURE.
EH?
SHE SAID THAT ONE DAY THE SECOND SON WILL MURDER THE FIRST SON..
THAT'S WHY SHE ORDERED THE ELDEST SON AWAY

WHAT THE...?
TOKIWA-SAN..
HATSUKO-SAMA WASN'T AT YOUR FATHER'S DEATHBED
WHAT?
TOKIWA-SAN,
DO YOU KNOW THAT THE HOUSE WHERE YOU LIVE NOW, THAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE BUILT IN STRICT ACCORDANCE WITH HATSUKO-SAMA'S DESIGN,
IS ACTUALLY A NIGHTMARISH STRUCTURE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF DIVINATION AND FENG SHUI?
ISN'T THIS RIGHT, TASUKU-SAN?
THAT'S RIGHT.
I SET FOOT HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME AT HATSUKO-SAMA'S FUNERAL,
BUT IT WAS SO OVER-FLOWING WITH ILL WILL AND EVIL THAT IT STARTLED ME.
IT DRIVES ITS INHAB-ITANTS MAD.


BESIDES, I KNEW THAT IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE.
I THOUGHT OF TELLING HIM THE REASON, BUT DIVINATION, CURSES AND EVERYTHING RELATED TO THEM IS STRICTLY BANNED IN THE TAKATSUKASA PRINCIPAL HOUSE.
YES
THAT'S WHY YOU ADVISED TOKIWA-SAN TO CHANGE HOUSES...


WERE DECEIVED BY HATSUKO-SAMA'S LUST TO SEE HER OWN KINSMEN FIGHT.
ALL OF YOU

SHE ALSO HATED THE CONCUBINES AND THEIR CHILDREN AND EVERYTHING ELSE...
HATSUKO-SAMA DETESTED LORD HIROMICHI, TOKIWA-SAN.
MAN-ZOU-SAN.
THAT'S TOO-

THEY ARE ALL LIES
THE PREDIC-TION
THE WILL.
IT'S A LIE THAT SHE LOVED ONLY TOKIWA-SAN.
IT'S A LIE THAT SHE HATED NAOSHI-SAN
THAT'S ALL.
IT WAS ALL JUST TO SEE LORD HIROMICHI'S ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN FIGHT AND SPILL EACH OTHER'S BLOOD.
THAT WASN'T A PREDICTION IT WAS A CURSE

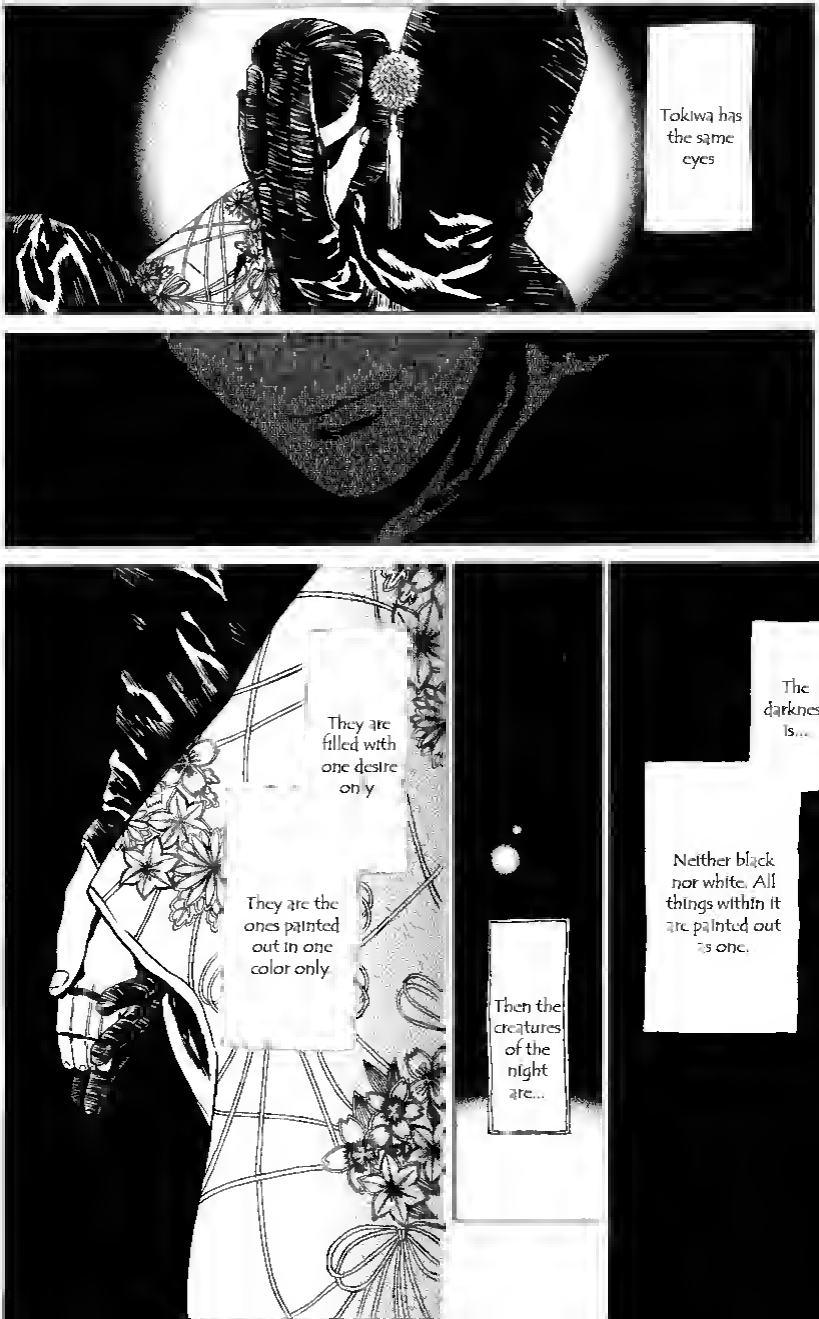
Final Act.

The turn of the age.

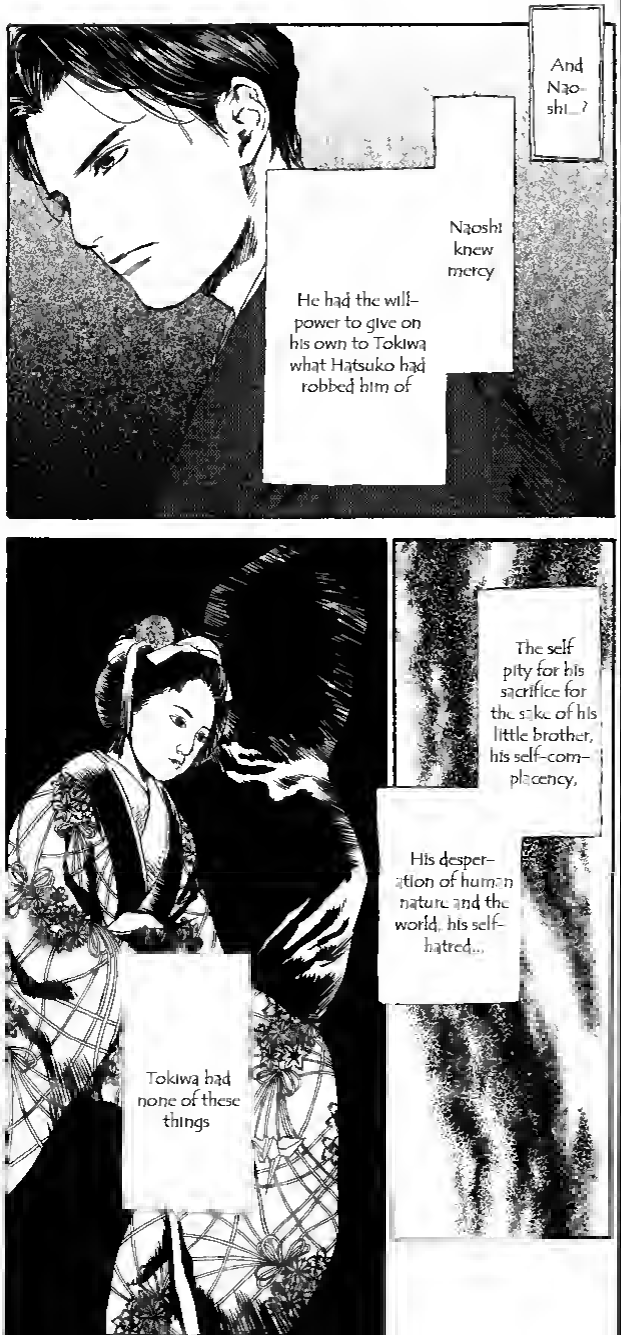
What a perfect night for the falling of the curtains of this play.
A night as beautiful as a dream.

What about the creature of the night...?

I like Yam-igozen more.
And I thought what you wanted was the Flaming Demon.
I will obtain it.
And you don't be jealous.
Ah, you're teasing again.
Aren't they both creatures of the night?
They're not the same
What pure eyes

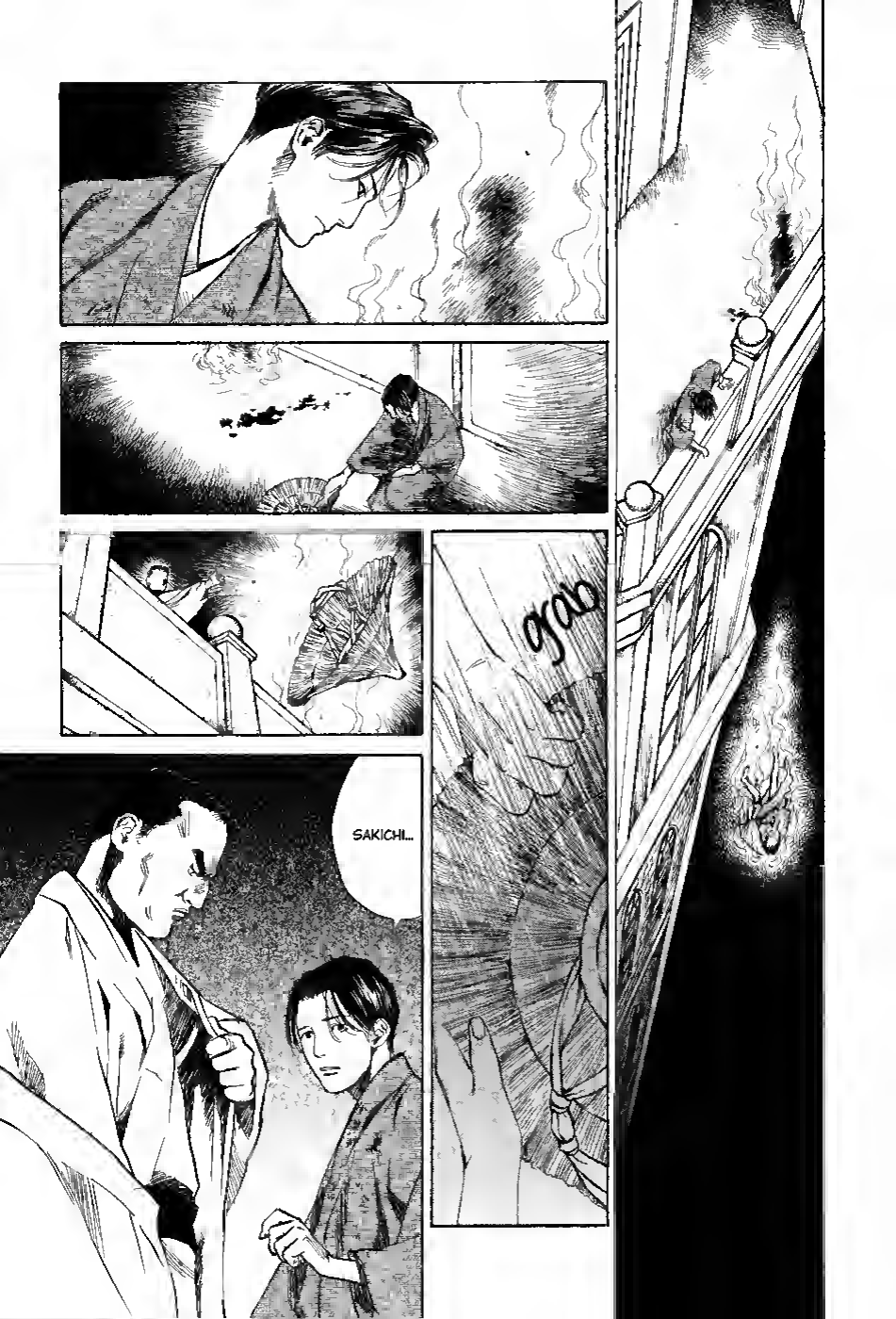

Tokiwa has the same eyes
The darkness is...
Neither black nor white. All things within it are painted out as one.
Then the creatures of the night are...
They are filled with one desire only
They are the ones painted out in one color only

*NOTE: THE TWO MAIN STREAM IDEAS [illegible] REACHING ENLIGHTENMENT A.B 1) REACHING IT ONLY AFTER A [illegible] TIME, USUALLY AS A PRIEST OR 2) REACHING IT INSTANTLY (AND RATHER RANDOMLY) AND AVAILABLE TO ANYONE.
No matter if you have to enter priesthood to reach enlightenment or anyone can achieve it in one supreme instant*, all teachings are all about one thing only
Just one desire pure and sublime
Thus, you transcend humanity and rise to the demonic
Once I told you that someone dyed with the color of the night may look like a Bosatsu*
Because a Bosatsu is also filled with one desire only.
*NOTE: BODHISATTVA, A PERSON WHO IS WORTHY OF NIRVANA, BUT DELAYS IT SO THAT THEY CAN HELP AS MANY OTHER BEINGS AS POSSIBLE
Desire?
You want to see the man you are in love with. You do not wish to bind him for life, to obtain him, you desire nothing from him.
You are filled with just this one simple, childish desire to see him for a moment.

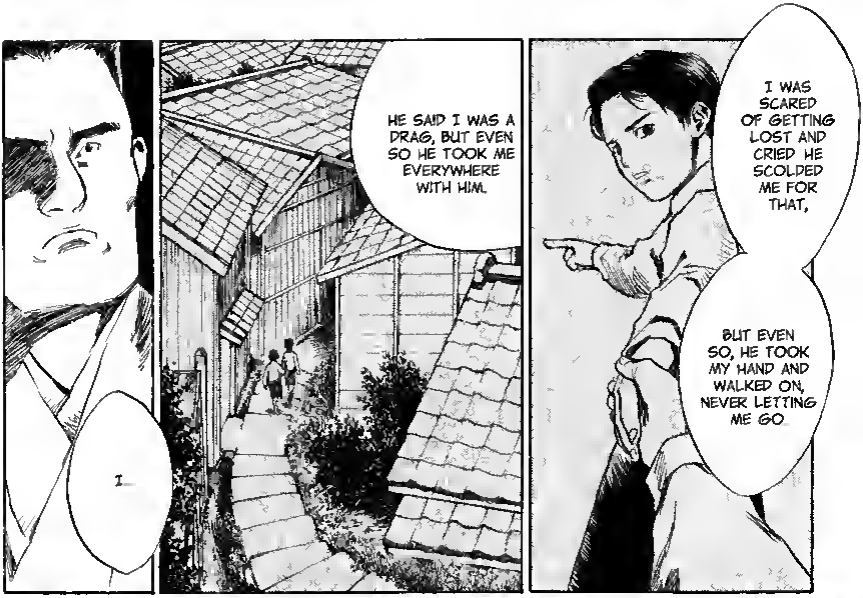

And Nao-shi...?
Naoshi knew mercy
He had the will-power to give on his own to Tokiwa what Hatsuko had robbed him of
Just like you, Tokiwa transcended as well
The self pity for his sacrifice for the sake of his little brother, his self-com-placency,
His desper-ation of human nature and the world, his self-hatred...
Tokiwa had none of these things

Tokiwa only had one single wish.
To give to Naoshi.
To give Naoshi all the things Tokiwa had and Naoshi didn't

KYAAA!
He had absolutely no other desire but this one


ggaa
SAKICHI...

THE FLAMING DEMON IS NOT DEAD...
THE FLAMING DEMON IS TAKATSUKASA TOKIWA, SAKICHI
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS, TOKIWA-SAMA...?
WHY DID YOU DO SUCH A THING...?
TOKIWA-SAMA,
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
ONCE, I HELD HANDS WITH NAOSHI JUST LIKE THIS AND WE WALKED TOGETHER
THE CHIROU HALL...!
I REMEMBERED THAT WHILE I WAS WAITING FOR NAOSHI IN THE CHIROU HALL
WE WALKED TOGETHER THROUGH A MAZE.


I...
HE SAID I WAS A DRAG, BUT EVEN SO HE TOOK ME EVERYWHERE WITH HIM.
I WAS SCARED OF GETTING LOST AND CRIED HE SCOLDED ME FOR THAT,
BUT EVEN SO, HE TOOK MY HAND AND WALKED ON, NEVER LETTING ME GO

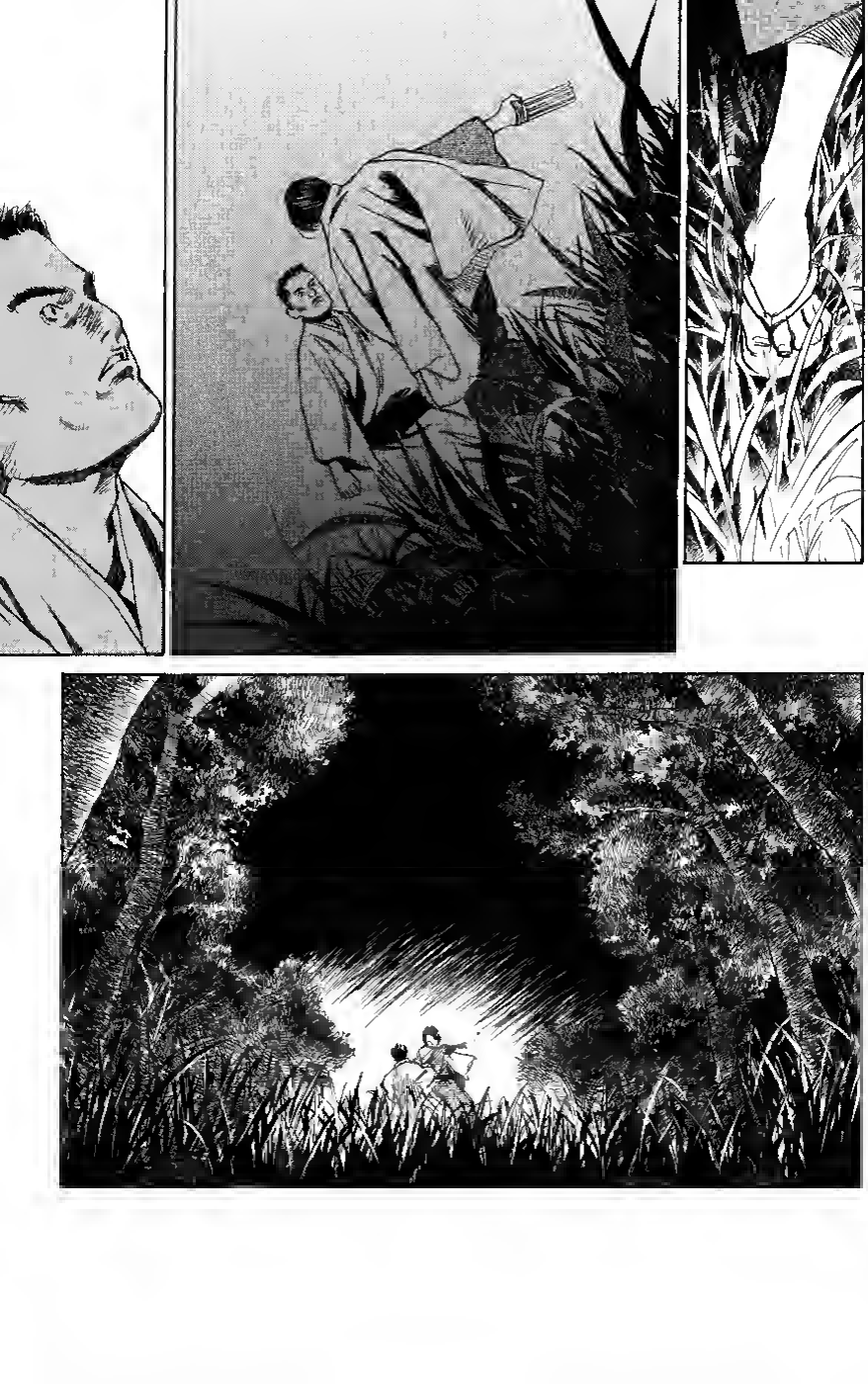
I STOLE SO MANY THINGS FROM NAOSHI
TOKIWA-SAMA...

I JUST WANTED TO GIVE THEM ALL BACK WITH MY OWN HANDS
AND YET NAOSHI DROPPED INTO THESE HANDS THE ONLY THING I HAD NOT MANAGED TO STEAL FROM HIM...

I LOVED NAOSHI.

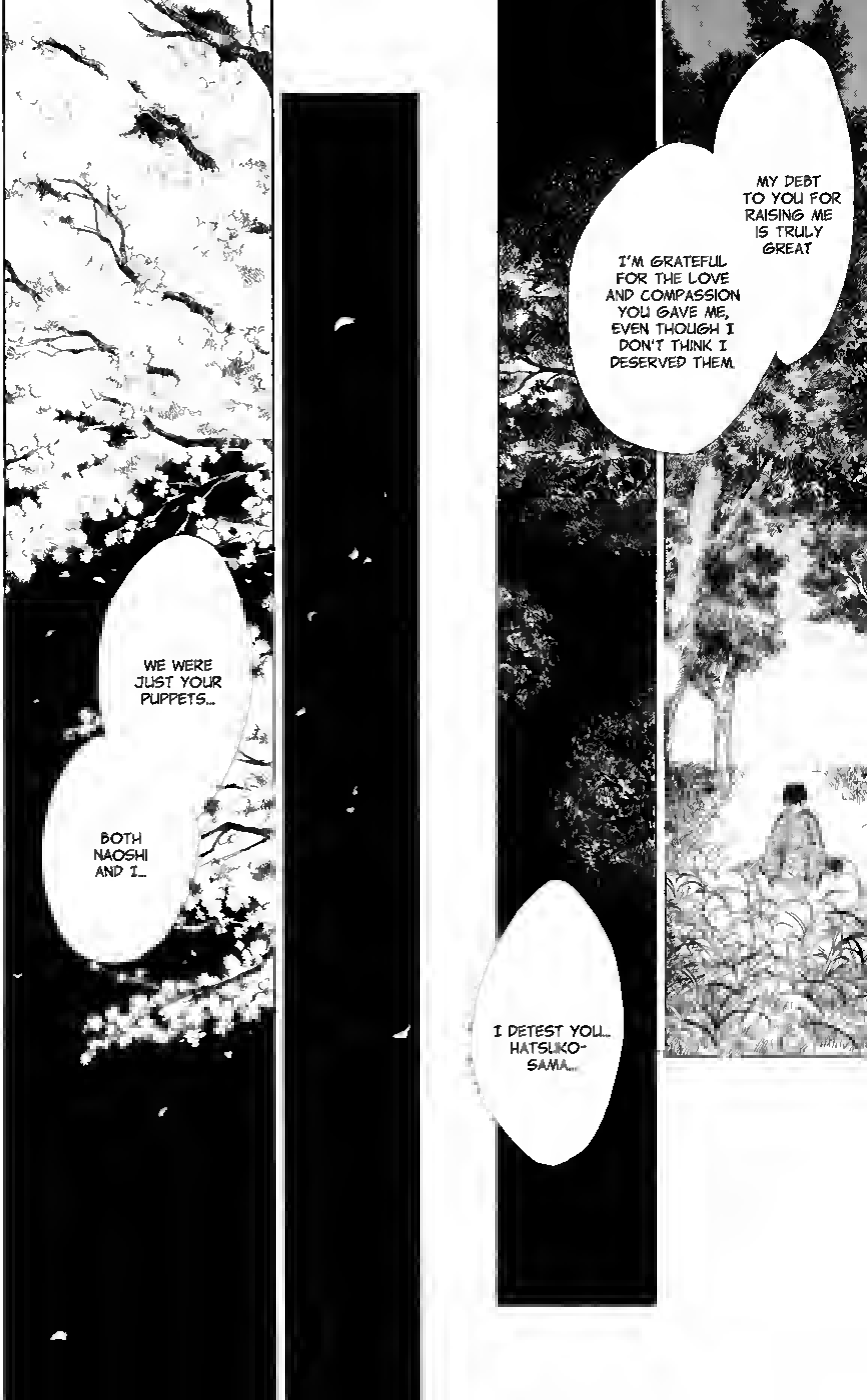
I WILL NEVER LET THIS HAPPEN.
TOKIWA-SAMA...
WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY? THAT THE ELDEST TAKATSUKASA SON WAS A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING, CAST OUT BY HIS OWN MOTHER,
AN UNSPEAKABLE VILLAIN WHO KILLED PEOPLE FOR THE SAKE OF THE INHERITANCE AND EVEN TRIED TO MURDER HIS OWN LITTLE BROTHER?
WILL THEY FEEL PITY AND COMPASSION AND SYMPATHY FOR ME?
AND THEN SPEAK EVEN MORE BADLY OF NAOSHI!?

I'VE ALREADY KILLED SIX PEOPLE.
SEVEN, WITH THAT WOMAN
PLEASE, DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH SUCH A FACE
IT'S NOT TRUE!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU TREASURE ME, IT DOESN'T MATTER. BECAUSE I'VE ALREADY KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE.
IF WE COUNT THEM, TOO, THEN TEN PEOPLE.
AHH, AND NAOSHI, TOO... IT WAS REALLY ME WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF THE PEOPLE NAOSHI KILLED



TOKIWA...
SAMA...

FORGIVE ME...
PLEASE FORGIVE ME, SAKICHI...
I WILL REPAY YOU FOR THIS... IN HELL, AS MUCH AS YOU WANT ME TO.
TOKI...


MY DEBT TO YOU FOR RAISING ME IS TRULY GREAT
I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE LOVE AND COMPASSION YOU GAVE ME, EVEN THOUGH I DON'T THINK I DESERVED THEM.
I DETEST YOU... HATSUKO-SAMA...
WE WERE JUST YOUR PUPPETS...
BOTH NAOSHI AND I...

IF THIS IS FATE, THEN I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY
BUT WHY WAS I BORN AS A SOUL LOCKED INSIDE A PUPPET?
HATSUKO-SAMA'S...
I WISH... I WISH I NEVER HAD A SOUL, A HEART...
I WISH I HAD BEEN JUST AN EMPTY VESSEL, A PUPPET TO DANCE TO HATSUKO-SAMA STRINGS

...SOB...
HOW COULD BOTH OF THEM THINK OF THE SAME THING?
BUT...
DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ASTROLOGY, HIRAKAWA-SAN?
IT'S A WESTERN KIND OF STAR DIVINATION, RIGHT?
YES

PEOPLE LIVE IN A WAY LAID OUT BY THE POSITION OF THE STARS THE MOMENT THEY WERE BORN.
THEN TWO PEOPLE BORN IN THE SAME DAY SHOULD LEAD VERY SIMILAR LIVES, SHOULD THEY NOT?
SO...
AND NAOSHI-SAN AND TOKIWA-SAN WERE ASTRAL TWINS IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORDS.
THIS IS CALLED "ASTRAL TWINS."

ARE WE SUPPOSED TO ACCEPT THAT THERE ARE SUCH THINGS AS MONSTERS NOW?
I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE THAT YOU BASED WHAT YOU SAID ON THE PRESUMPTION THAT THERE ARE MONSTERS TAKING ON HUMAN SHAPE.
DIDN'T YOU THINK THAT THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS MONSTERS IN THIS WORLD?
SO, MANZOU-KUN.
YES?
AM I... DON'T GIVE ME THAT-
ARE YOU UNHAPPY WITH THAT, HIRAKAWA-SAN?
THAT'S HOW IT WOULD SEEM
BUT-

*NOTE: HISTORICALLY, THAT WAS PROCLAIMED ON THE 30TH OF JULY 1912
!
NEWS-PAPER EXTRA!
THE DEMISE OF HIS MAJESTY THE GREAT EMPEROR MEIJI!*
SOME-ONE-
SOMEONE GO BUY ONE PAPER!
THEY WERE HIDING IT
WAS HE ILL? I HAVEN'T HEARD EVEN A WHISPER OF SUCH A THING...
WHAT IN THE WORLD...?
AH, YES, I'M SURE THEY WERE HIDING IT

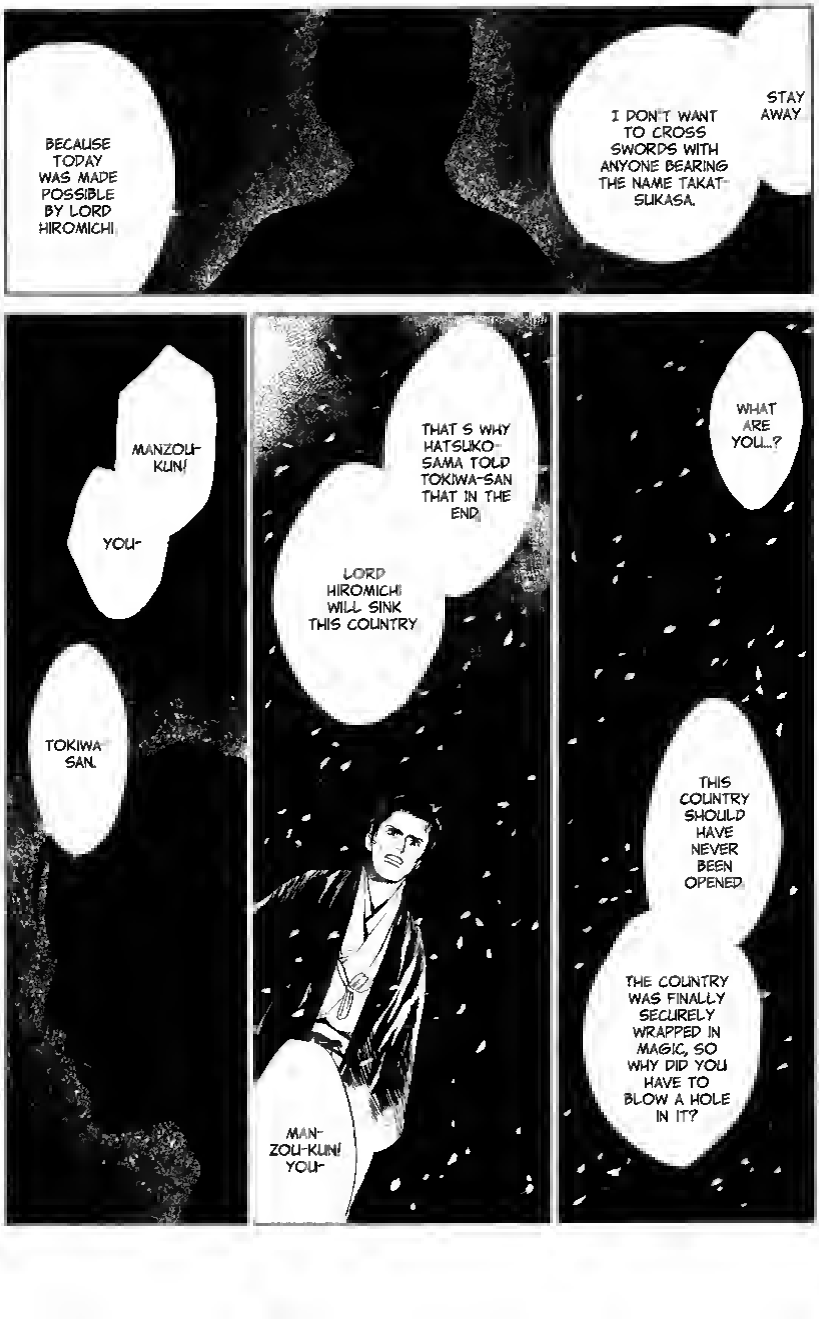
*NOTE ALTERNATIVE NAME OF JAPAN'S FIRST (NON-MYTHOLOGICAL) EMPEROR, EMPEROR MEIJI WAS INDEED THE 122ND EMPEROR AFTER HIM.
HE WAS ALSO THE ACCURSED ONE WHO CAME TO RULE 122 GENERATIONS AFTER SANO-NO-MIKOTO.*
OF COURSE IT IS
HIS MAJESTY IS A CORNERSTONE OF THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS OF JAPAN AND A PILLAR SUPPORTING THE VERY HEAVENS OVER OUR LAND.*
!?
DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS TERRIBLE?
THAT'S WHY, HIRAKAWA-SAN, THEY SAW THAT THE POWER THAT KEEPS THE DARKNESS AT BAY IS GROWING WEAK AND THEY STARTED LEAPING OUT FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE DEEP DARK SEA.
THAT'S WHY TASUKU-SAN COULDN'T MEET HIM.
HIS MAJESTY WAS IN A BAD CONDITION FOR SOME TIME
THE UNVARNISHED TRUTH IS THAT HE WAS A LIVING GONER FOR A VERY LONG TIME BEFORE HIS DEATH.
WHAT THE...?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SAYING?

THEY, THE FISH OF THE NIGHT.
FISH... OF THE NIGHT?
THANKS TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT WHICH KEPT GOING ON ABOUT PROGRESS AND OPENING UP AND CASTING ASIDE THE OLD,
ALL THE MONSTROSITIES THAT HAVE BEEN SLEEPING FOR 2500 YEARS CAN FINALLY COME OUT IN THE OPEN

THE "ANCIENT JAPAN" IS A WORLD OF BOTH HUMANS AND SPIRITS
BUT THEY WERE NEVER MEANT TO COEXIST
SANO-NO-MIKOTO USED SORCERY TO SUBSIDE THE SPIRITS AND SO THE MONSTROSITIES HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SWALLOW THEIR HATRED AND SLEEP
WHAT...?
THEY TOOK EVERY CHANCE THEY GOT TO CRAWL OUT OF THE DARKNESS AND WANDER THROUGH THIS WORLD
AS FOR HUMANS, WELL, THEY WERE CUNNING, WITH THEIR BUDDHAS AND ONMYOUDOU AND WHATNOT
AND ON TOP OF THAT, SACHI-NO-MIYA* APPEARED
HE HAD SUCH VAST, UNRIVALED MAGICAL POWERS THAT WE THOUGHT THAT WAS THE END OF THE LINE FOR US
I KNEW IT, YOU
YOU'RE HUMAN AND YET I WAS SURE YOU HAVE AN OMINOUS PRESENCE
STAY PUT.

*NOTE: EMPEROR MEIJI'S BOYHOOD NAME

YOU HAVE GREAT MAGICAL ABILITIES TASUKU-SHA...
BUT IT'S FOR THE BEST NOT TO BE SO CONCEITED AS TO THINK YOU CAN HUNT ME DOWN
MAN-ZOU-KUN...
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
A NEW ERA IS COMING HIRAKA-WA-SAN
JUST AS YOU WISHED
ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT BE A VERY FIT FOR HUMANS TO LIVE IN.
HOW DARE YOU...?
OR PERHAPS YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE OF POWER BETWEEN US AND YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DO IT?
WHY, OH WHY DID I SEEM TO YOU TO BE HUMAN?
chuckle
YOU BASTARD...


BECAUSE TODAY WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY LORD HIROMICHI.
I DON'T WANT TO CROSS SWORDS WITH ANYONE BEARING THE NAME TAKATSUKASA.
STAY AWAY.
MANZOU-KUN!
YOU-
TOKIWA-SAN.
THAT'S WHY HATSUKO-SAMA TOLD TOKIWA-SAN THAT IN THE END,
LORD HIROMICHI WILL SINK THIS COUNTRY
MAN-ZOU-KUN! YOU-
WHAT ARE YOU...?
THIS COUNTRY SHOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN OPENED.
THE COUNTRY WAS FINALLY SECURELY WRAPPED IN MAGIC, SO WHY DID YOU HAVE TO BLOW A HOLE IN IT?

WILL YOU BECOME A DOLL?
YES... I SAID IT.
!
YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO BE JUST AN EMPTY VESSEL, A PUPPET.
WILL THAT END THE PAIN?
IT WILL
TOKIWA-SAN!
WILL I ESCAPE FROM HATSUKO-SAMA'S HANDS?
OF COURSE YOU WILL.

I'M A MUCH KINDER PUPPETEER THAN HATSUKO-SAMA.
TOKIWA-SAN, DON'T!
TOKIWA-SAN!
Girl

MARINO... SAN?!
Yes?
Take good care of Tokiwa
It would be a great loss to let such a splendid creature of the night die
WHAT ARE YOU..?
ARE YOU A MON-STER...?
Indeed what am I?
Don't you think so?
in order to protect Tokiwa-san you'd best take an example from Naoshi-san
MARINO-SAN IS...
SO EVERY-THING WAS YOUR DOING...

Girl
Yes?
I do not kill people like a murderer.
But am I a monster or a violent ghost or a death god...
chuckle
Do you like him?
OKIWA SAN_71
Yes.
Behold
What an incredibly beautiful Genta*
Truly...
*NOTE GENERIC NAME FOR "BISHIE" IN TRADITIONAL PLAYS AND SO ON ^^

Then be good friends
And thus, dear guests ends our humble performance
Take care on your way home
Because the night holds more than just darkness

Be very vigilant,
lest the horrors of the night enchant you.

EXTRA!
NEWSPAPER EXTRA!

WHAT...?
TOKIWA-SAMA!
WHERE ARE YOU?!
gasp
THE DEMISE OF HIS MAJESTY THE GREAT EMPEROR MEIJI!

TOKIWA-SAN AND MARINO-SAN
AND MANZOU-KUN ARE GONE!
WHAT IN THE WORLD HAPPENED...?!

TOKIWA-SAMA!
DID THIS REALLY HAPPEN...?
WASN'T IT A DREAM?
TOKIWA-SAMA!
ARE YOU HERE?!
MONSTERS CANNOT EXIST...!
KYAH!
Shock

I'VE BURIED A MIRROR HERE*, PURIFIED AND PROTECTED THE PLACE!
HALT!
YOU MUST NOT LEAVE THIS PLACE!
TASUKU-SAN, THAT'S...!
THAT'S... IMPOSSIBLE...

*NOTE: ANTI-BAD-LUCK MEASURE IN ONMYOUDOU

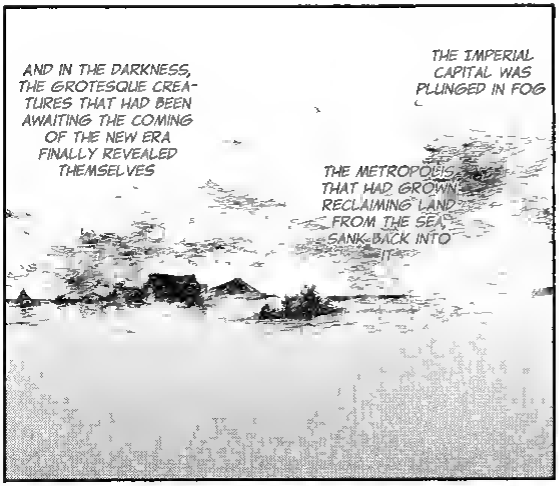
THE NIGHT HOLDS MUCH MORE THAN JUST DARKNESS.

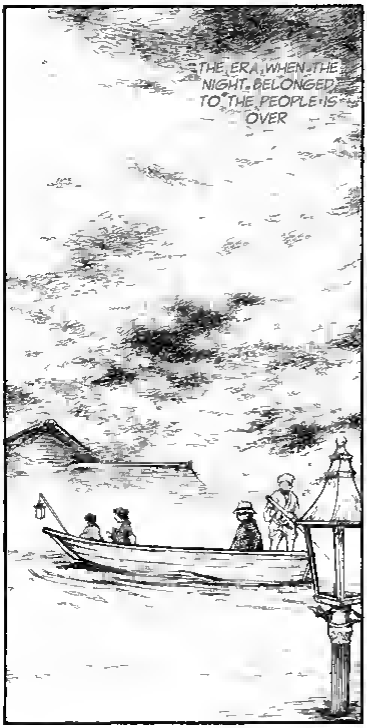
?
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING?
IT'S TOO EARLY FOR THE TIDE?
THE SEA IS...

THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL.
SANK.
SINCE THAT DAY
THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL LOST THE LIGHT OF THE SUN...

And row
And row

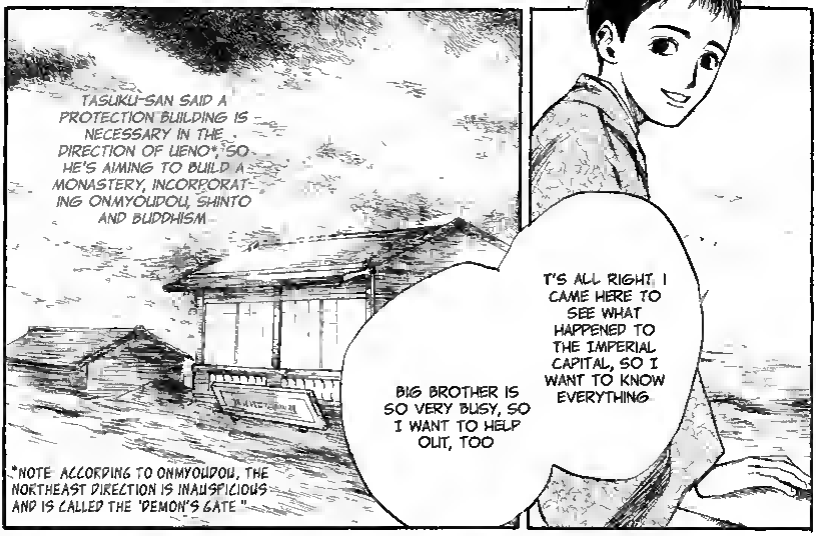
creak
creak
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
chuckle
We've waited for this day for so long
This is a night of celebration!
We'll let you go for now
But be wary of the dark from now on

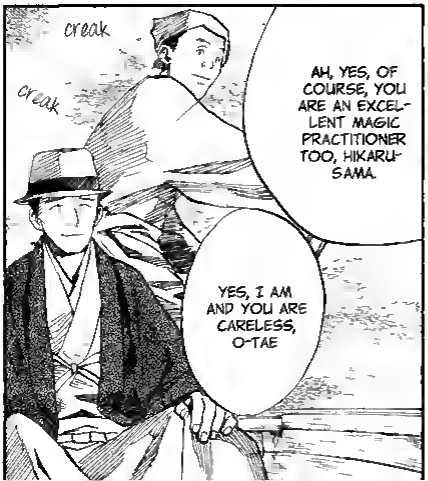

AND IN THE DARKNESS, THE GROTESQUE CREATURES THAT HAD BEEN AWAITING THE COMING OF THE NEW ERA FINALLY REVEALED THEMSELVES
THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL WAS PLUNGED IN FOG
THE METROPOLIS THAT HAD GROWN RECLAIMING LAND FROM THE SEA, SANK BACK INTO IT

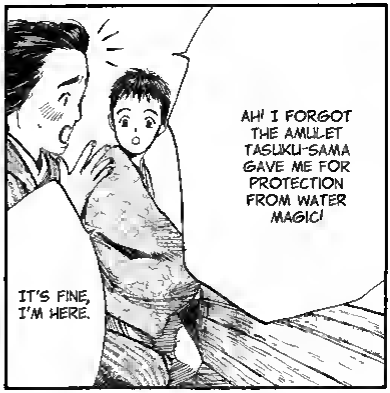


THE NIGHT IS FEARSOME.

Creak
AHHH, HIKARU-SAMA, IF YOU LEAN OUT SO MUCH YOU'LL FALL!
WHAT'S THAT?


TASUKU-SAN SAID A PROTECTION BUILDING IS NECESSARY IN THE DIRECTION OF UENO*, SO HE'S AIMING TO BUILD A MONASTERY, INCORPORATING ONMYOUDOU, SHINTO AND BUDDHISM
*NOTE: ACCORDING TO ONMYOUDOU, THE NORTHEAST DIRECTION IS INAUSPICIOUS AND IS CALLED THE "DEMON'S GATE."
BIG BROTHER IS SO VERY BUSY, SO I WANT TO HELP OUT, TOO
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I CAME HERE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL, SO I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING.


creak
creak
AH, YES, OF COURSE, YOU ARE AN EXCELLENT MAGIC PRACTITIONER TOO, HIKARU-SAMA.
YES, I AM. AND YOU ARE CARELESS, O-TAE


AH! I FORGOT THE AMULET TASUKU-SAMA GAVE ME FOR PROTECTION FROM WATER MAGIC!
IT'S FINE, I'M HERE.

HIRAKAWA-SAN,
WHICH PART OF THE CITY IS THIS?
ASAKUSA.
HIKARU-SAN ARRIVED ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO.
I'LL BE SPENDING THE EVENING TOGETHER WITH HIS SISTERS.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S VERY CURIOUS ABOUT EVERYTHING HE SEES HERE.
THE ROOM HE RENTED LOST ITS TENANT.
SO SOMEONE ELSE LIVES THERE NOW.
I HAVEN'T MET HIM SINCE THEN.
THE VICINITY OF KAWARAMACHI...
AS FOR MANZOU-KUN
I JUST_
BY THE WAY, DID YOU HEAR?
EVERYONE IN THE REGION IS GOSSIPING ABOUT IT.

THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL, TOUKEI.
APRIL, THE 29TH YEAR OF THE MEIJI PERIOD (1896), THE GREAT EMPEROR MEIJI PASSES AWAY.
THE NEXT [illegible] THE SUN [illegible] UP [illegible] MARCH THE [illegible] YEAR, 2ND [illegible] OF THE KOUEI [illegible]
IT SEEMS THAT THERE'S A NEW PERFORMER WITH SPLENDID DOLLS OF A GIRL AND A GENTA.

*NOTE: HISTORICALLY, IN [illegible] JAPAN SUFFERED A HIGHLY DESTRUCTIVE EARTHQUAKE, DEVASTATING TSUNAMI AND SEVERAL SEVERE TYPHOONS. BUT THE EMPEROR MEIJI LIVED FOR 16 MORE YEARS IN GOOD HEALTH. THERE IS NO KOUEI PERIOD.

TOUKEI IBUN: THE END

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